MINETTE

A STORY OF THE FIRST CRUSADE

GEORGE F. CRAM

813 Cram
C889m Minette

CHRISTIAN HERITAGE COLLEGE
2100 Greenfield Dr.
El Cajon, CA 92021

813
C889m

CHRISTIAN
HERITAGE
COLLEGE
LIBRARY

From
THE EVA SPILMER LIBRARY
OF MAN'S SEARCH FOR GOD

"EVERY DAY * * SHE HAD * * LIVED OVER AND OVER AGAIN THAT PARTING SCENE." (Page 36.)

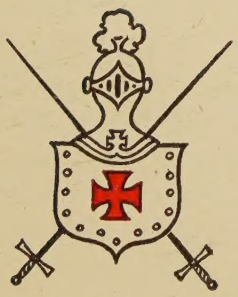
MINETTE

A STORY
of the
FIRST CRUSADE

by

GEORGE F. CRAM, 1841–1928.

With ILLUSTRATIONS
by WALDO BOWSER
and F.D. SCHOOK

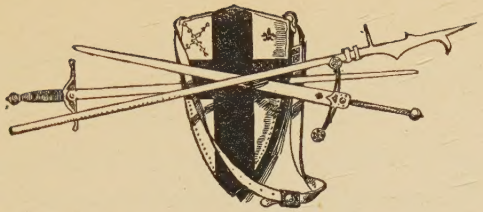


n|DD 1-26952

CHICAGO
John W. Iliff & Company
1901

COPYRIGHT, 1901, BY
JOHN W. ILIFF & CO.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED



INTRODUCTION

Many centuries have ended since the actors in the events here related have passed away, and if since then a more intelligent civilization leads us to marvel at the singular infatuation on which the story of "Minette" is founded, let us not forget that there was much that was noble, much that was sincere, in the courage and devotion of the tumultuous bodies of enthusiasts who formed those armies of the Crusades and found graves in the Holy Land during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. A thousand years later our own story may need the covering of as broad a mantle of charity.

In studying that remarkable historic movement known as the First Crusade, my attention was arrested by a line here and a page there, from which I was able to trace a story full of strange pathos, and all the more interesting, as it seemed to me, that its characters, many of them at least, were real; and, gathering and connecting these fragmentary traces, I have tried to present them in such words as would make them no less interesting to you than they were to me.

The story is not conventional, but when you have closed its pages you will not easily dismiss it from your memory.

THE AUTHOR.

35258

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

https://archive.org/details/minettestoryoffi0000unse

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	"God Willeth It!"	3
II	The Duel	27
III	Louise	34
IV	"I Cannot, Will Not, Be Your Wife"	41
V	Barri le Bon	55
VI	"On to Jerusalem"	79
VII	Guibert de Barreaux	97
VIII	Louise and Tancred	103
IX	The Shipwreck	111
X	Duplicity of Alexius	123
XI	Bohemond Won by the Emperor	132
XII	Death of Count Luis	156
XIII	The Conflict in the Wine Room	164
XIV	Guibert Visits Kilidge-Arslan	179
XV	The Battle of Nicæa	186
XVI	Nicæa Surrendered to Alexius	196
XVII	Minette Goes to the Crusade	204
XVIII	Capture of Minette	214
XIX	The Night on the Mountain	226
XX	The Suffering of the Crusaders	240
XXI	The Traitor Revealed	254
XXII	Emir-Feir	261
XXIII	"On the Fifth Night, Do Not Sleep"	279

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXIV	The Crusaders Enter Antioch	292
XXV	Massacre at Antioch	303
XXVI	The Moslem's Strange Story	315
XXVII	Discovery of the Holy Lance	322
XXVIII	Defeat of Corbogha	329
XXIX	The Wounded Knight	341
XXX	Minette and Azzadin	355
XXXI	Jerusalem	374
XXXII	"Take Me Away, Tancred!"	391

ILLUSTRATIONS

"EVERY DAY * * SHE HAD * * LIVED OVER AND OVER AGAIN THAT PARTING SCENE." . . . *Frontispiece*

"AND IN THAT BRIEF GLANCE TWO SOULS ENTERED A NEW WORLD." . . . . *Facing p.* 10

"HE HELD THE LETTER OVER ITS YELLOW FLAME AND WATCHED IT SLOWLY BURN TO THE VERY END." . " 100

"'SEE,' SHE EXPLAINED, * * 'THEY LOOK LIKE MEN IN CROWDS.'" . . . . . " 130

"THE CROSS UPON HIS BREAST PROCLAIMED HIM A KNIGHT OF THE CRUSADE." . . . . . " 138

"'IF YOU MEDITATE FURTHER WRONG, TAKE CARE THAT WE DO NOT MEET AGAIN.'" . . . . " 248

"HIS EYES STARE, AND AS THE KNIGHT RELEASES HIM HE FALLS TO THE GROUND DEAD." . . . " 312

"'TIS ONLY A SLAVE, STEALING UNBIDDEN REST.'" . " 320

"AZZADIN RIDES BESIDE THE CART, * * * 'THERE,' SAID HE, 'IS THE WATCH TOWER.'" . . . " 364

MINETTE

CHAPTER I

"GOD WILLETH IT!"

IT was in the sunny month of June, in the year 1096, that a select party, mostly of noble blood, was congregated at the elegant chateau of the Count of Touraine, not far from Tours, on the bank of a little stream which flowed into the Loire. It was a delightful evening following one of those perfect summer days for which France is noted, and many of the guests were enjoying the soft air among the flowers in the adjoining park.

Seated in a little arbor under the shadow of a magnificent elm were the daughter of the Count, a beautiful young girl of eighteen, who had just returned home from the convent at Tours, where she had been receiving an education fitting young ladies of quality, and a gentleman of some twenty-five years, though his appearance would indicate that he was somewhat older. He was a son of Count Luis of Parthenay and there had been an understanding between the two Counts that their families should be united through the marriage of the young couple. It was a formal affair, as are all French engagements, and while Guibert was as passionately in love as a young man of an entirely selfish nature could be with Minette, for she was as lovely in person as she

was in mind and heart, the young lady was acquiescent only, it being the wish of her father and therefore a duty.

It was the first time they had met since their engagement and while the young man would gladly have talked of their approaching marriage, Minette, with becoming modesty, turned the conversation in an altogether different and not so pleasing a direction.

"And do you not intend, then," she said, "to join the noble army of Crusaders and assist in delivering the Holy City from the infidels?"

"Why should I do so?" he replied; "are there not enough and more than enough already engaged for the enterprise which many of us believe to be not only hazardous but an unwarranted outburst of religious fanaticism, and is my presence here of so little moment to you that you would, at this time, too, when I had hoped the sentiment of love would prompt you to name an early day for our marriage, desire me to leave you and engage in a rash attempt impossible of execution, attended by a thousand dangers?"

"Surely you do not fear. I always thought you brave and have been told your sword has more than once been drawn in personal quarrels, and does the honor of our Lord, whose city has been desecrated, whose very birthplace has been defiled by the infidel, demand nothing from your courage? Can you remain insensible to the words of Peter? I saw him at Tours clad in his long cloak, with bare feet and arms and heard him tell of the suffering of the Christians who lived in Jerusalem, how they remained there to attend to the comfort of those pilgrims whose devotion led them there, and how the Caliph of Egypt, the wicked Hakem, compelled them to wear upon their necks a wooden cross of five pounds

weight, confiscated their little property, carried off their children as slaves and demolished their sacred church. I cannot remember it all; it was too horrible."

"Peter is a madman whose insanity has convulsed not France alone, but the whole of Europe, whose misdirected zeal has entered alike the palace of the noble and the hut of the peasant. He has started a conflagration which rivers of blood may not extinguish. Such is the popular craze he has produced that I have seen crowds of people heaping presents upon him and plucking the very hairs from his mule as sacred relics. I will admit that he has used his tremendous power on many occasions for good, but a century will not remove the traces of a horror that he has inaugurated. Scarce three months have elapsed since the rude, undisciplined mob—for it cannot be called an army—of more than a hundred thousand men, women and children, ill clad, many even without arms, and without any means of subsistence, started with Peter at their head on what will prove to be their funeral march, without any thought of the distance they would travel to reach the Holy City, the climate they would endure or the enemies they would encounter, believing the conquest was to be the Lord's and they with the divine Peter would be the instruments of His glory.

"It was but a mob of peasants. They desired neither discipline nor order, for Peter told them in the words of Solomon, 'the grasshoppers have no king and yet they go in companies.' And now the great nobles, animated by the same insane enthusiasm, inspired by the same man, are collecting the knights and soldiers for a still greater movement of such military strength that it may at least be justly dignified by the word 'Crusade.' Is it wise, Minette, to abandon ourselves to this popular delusion? Even St. Jerome said centuries ago that 'the court of

heaven is as open in Britain as in Jerusalem,' and Saint Augustine exhorted all Christians to 'take no thought for long voyages; go where your faith is; it is not by ship but by love that we go to Him who is everywhere.' Surely you will say he is wise who remains to protect the one he loves."

"I will say he is—prudent. Do not tell me what was said centuries ago by Saints Jerome and Augustine. Perhaps the conditions then—I do not know—were not the same, but I know that Peter is not alone in his noble zeal for restoring to the children of the Lord the possession of the Holy Sepulchre. I have heard my father say that the holy father Pope Sylvester, one of the greatest of men, proclaimed not so many years ago an expedition to the Holy Land, and if you had been at Clermont last November when the people met at the grand council—"

A merry peal of laughter here interrupted what seemed likely to become a serious quarrel. "Beg pardon, Minette and Monsieur Guibert, but I've heard nothing the whole blessed evening but expeditions and crusades. In the salon Sir Hugh and the Count of Blois grew so heated over their wine and plans for exterminating those unhappy Turks that I thought they were going to fight, and when Madame de Latarre began that old story of her interview with Peter over in Flanders last summer I seized Cousin Lacey's arm and came out in the park, hoping he might have some delightful love affair to tell me about, but we hadn't gone a dozen steps before he commenced to talk about the cross he wears on his coat and the glory of fighting the infidel in the service of the Lord. I was just recovering from my discomfiture and considering how I should punish him for his ungallant behavior when we unwittingly passed this way and overheard your words, and it all seemed so supremely amusing I simply

exploded. We drank the Crusade at breakfast and ate it on our rolls; it seasoned the salads for lunch and was served on the meats for dinner; nobody talks of anything else. I haven't heard a word of love or scandal or marriage; not even a funeral. But pardon me again; in my confusion I quite forgot we are not all old friends. This gentleman is my cousin, Monsieur Lacey de Hauteville, and I commend him to your esteem, Mademoiselle de Treville, daughter of the Count of Touraine, and to you, Monsieur Guibert de Barreaux, son of Count Luis."

The speaker, daughter of the Viscount of Berri, had been companion of Minette at the convent. A fair girl, tall and graceful, full of vivacity, she had little in common with the fanaticism of the hour, and as we may well believe would have gladly infused a little of her own bright sunshine into the gloomy countenances of the enthusiasts about her.

The two gentlemen saluted each other somewhat coldly, while Minette exclaimed: "I am delighted that your walk brought you in this direction, dear Louise, and all the more so that it has given me the acquaintance of another brave knight who will carry the cross into Palestine."

"Thanks, Mademoiselle," remarked de Hauteville. "I could not help overhearing your remark about the grand council at Clermont. I was there with my cousin Tancred, with whose company I have engaged for the glorious Crusade. Never was there such a gathering in France. All the towns and villages in the neighborhood were full of people and all over the intervening fields and meadows were spread tents and pavilions into which crowds were congregated. There were over two hundred bishops and thirteen archbishops present and when at the tenth session the good Pope Urban called Peter to his side on the great

platform that had been built outside of the church, there was a silence over that vast multitude as though the very earth and all the planets had ceased to revolve and were listening. Peter spoke first. He told us what his own eyes had seen of the suffering and humiliations of the Christians at Jerusalem; what he himself had endured there; how he had been made to pay even for admission to the Holy City and for permission of the hated infidel to gaze upon the spectacle of the insults and tortures he there witnessed.

"Then the holy father, clad in his papal robe, invested with the majesty of divine love and wisdom, pictured to us in all their painful details the dreadful sufferings of the noble, patiently enduring Christians in that royal city 'which the Redeemer of the human race had made illustrious by His coming, had honored by His residence, had hallowed by His passion, had purchased by His death, had distinguished by His burial. She now demands of you,' he said, 'her deliverance. Men of the west, men of France, men from beyond the mountains, nations chosen and beloved of God, right valiant knights, recall the virtues of your ancestors, the virtue and greatness and piety of King Charlemagne and all your other kings; it is from you above all that Jerusalem awaits and invokes deliverance, for to you above all nations God has granted signal glory in arms. Arise then, put on your armor and take the road to Jerusalem, for the remission of your sins, and depart assured of the imperishable glory which awaits you in the kingdom of heaven.'

"Then as if it were one voice there came from out of that vast, silent, listening multitude, like an inspiration from the celestial hosts, those soul-stirring words which will ring out upon the air louder than the angry clash of

steel when in the storm of battle the mighty arm of France strikes down the insolent reviler of our Master's name.

"*'God willeth it; God willeth it.'*

"Then what a scene ensued! Noble forgot his caste, tradesman his money and peasant his station; all pressed forward in one overpowering throng to receive the red cross, the pledge of the Crusade. I was among the first and here is the cross which the Pope placed upon me with his own hands. Oh, it was grand!"

As he ceased speaking he looked at Minette, who stood with parted lips, her brilliant eyes flashing emotions that had never before been awakened in her heart, and in that brief glance two souls entered a new world.

There was a moment's pause and then Louise exclaimed: "Really, Cousin Lacey, I did not know you could speak so enchantingly; if the subject were not so tiresome I should say you were quite delightful; but, come, it is late; nearly every one has left the park; had we not better return to the chateau?"

Slowly the little company proceeded along the gravel walk, fringed with sweet flowers which perfumed the air with their fragrance; but far more in harmony with the thoughts of Minette were the sombre shadows of the trees, whose leaves whispered in the gentle evening breeze, and sweeter than the flowers was the music of the new voices that were speaking to her from within.

Pausing a moment on the terrace, de Hauteville turned to Minette, saying, "Will you permit me, Mademoiselle, to express to you my gratitude for the renewed courage your sympathy with the holy cause has inspired in me and to here bid you adieu?"

"Do you go so soon?"

"I have an important message for Count Raymond;

it relates to the line of march of the three divisions of the expedition and must not be delayed. I shall depart very early in the morning."

"And will you not stop on your return?"

"I hardly think—ah! yes, certainly, if you wish it, Mademoiselle!" and taking her hand, he bowed low without lifting his eyes from the ground.

"I trust I may have the pleasure of meeting you again, Monsieur Guibert."

"It will be quite agreeable to me, whenever you may desire."

There was a meaning in the words of Guibert that could hardly be mistaken, and when Lacey in his surprise saw the frown on his brow and remembered that he had scarcely spoken during the brief period they had been together, he began to comprehend, and bowing with something more than his usual dignity, he entered the chateau with his cousin and proceeded immediately to his apartment. Then long after he had retired the glances of Minette, her sweet words, and the touch of her soft hand repeated themselves again and again, filling his soul with delight, but ever ending in pain, always the same.

And Minette, what had she done! Bound to Guibert by her father's word and by religious vows almost as sacred as the bonds of marriage, she had within that short hour silently given and accepted that noblest of the soul's emotions. And now, standing alone with Guibert, she felt with crushing force that she could not escape the fulfilment of the promise she had given. Offering him her hand, she said in her own sweet, gentle way,

"Good-night, Guibert; forgive me if I spoke hastily about your going with the Crusade. I did not mean it. You must be right." And looking at him with some-

"AND IN THAT BRIEF GLANCE TWO SOULS ENTERED A NEW WORLD."

thing like pity in her dark eyes, she passed on into the house.

A moment only after she had gone Guibert stood under the shadow of the trees and muttered, "I saw the looks, and felt her tremble. He will be back, he thinks, to paradise. Ah! by heaven! I will help him find it."

At the early dawn of the following morning Lacey had departed. He had slept little, but as the soft rays of the rising sun smiled upon him hope chased away every thought of doubt and gloom, and as he galloped along the river bank he determined that after his vow had been accomplished and the glory of the Lord had been re-established in the birthplace of the Redeemer and in His Holy City, he would devote his life to the unselfish love that had so suddenly entered his heart. In the battles for the Christian faith his love for Minette should give strength to his arm and be his shield of defense.

Uninfluenced by passion, by selfishness, by greed and lust and envy, what a citadel nature builds in the heart of youth upon the foundations of love.

A week had passed and all that week the soul of Minette had been busy with contending emotions. Duty called her one way; love beckoned another. How could she be false to the promises given to her father, to Guibert, and to the holy church? How could she plunge two loving hearts into the whirling abyss of despair? Duty! Love! day after day she struggled with these alternatives, night after night she sought relief in prayer. For many years her mother had slept within the borders of the silent city, and Louise, her only companion, had returned to Tours. There was no one to whom she could go for advice or sympathy; no one who could show her the way out of the mist into the light.

During the week Guibert had endeavored to repair by

constant attendance the damage that had been wrought in the impulsive exchange of glances that followed de Hauteville's outburst of enthusiasm that evening in the park. He had even intimated a thought of enlisting under the banner of Count Raymond. Hitherto it had been with him rather the acceptance of a situation gratifying to his pride, than the anticipation of the fulfilment of a cherished love; but as soon as the conviction was forced upon him that his own indifference had opened the way for a rival, his former complacent acceptance of the wishes of the two Counts developed into an insanely selfish passion.

Late one afternoon he had returned from a ride with Minette, inwardly irritated, for she had been more than usually silent, and as they stood for a moment before entering the chateau he exclaimed: "Minette, you have scarcely spoken to me during our ride. I am not unmindful of your changed manner since the evening that absurd young enthusiast intruded himself upon us. I have refrained from speaking of it because I believed your own good sense would soon lead you to dismiss from your mind the possible inception of a sentiment which in view of the relations we are about to enter could only be a passing fancy, at which you will smile in later years."

He could scarcely have chosen words so disastrous to his cause, but they were better, far better for Minette than the counsel or sympathy of a friend. With flashing eyes and looking him squarely in the face, she replied:

"We are not yet married," and turning quickly was about to leave him, when there was a sound of hoofs and in another moment Lacey de Hauteville dismounted from his magnificent coal black charger, the one Tancred had given him for the Crusade. Every trace of fatigue van-

ished from his beaming face as he extended his hand to Minette and felt her gentle touch.

"I hope you are well," he exclaimed to Monsieur Guibert. The latter bowed coldly and Minette with her charming woman's tact exclaimed:

"But come in at once; you must be very tired. I will call Charles, who will show you to your apartment, where you will be able to get but a short rest, for the dinner hour is near and we are all impatience to hear about your journey."

"And I have much to tell you," he replied.

As he disappeared Minette turned to Guibert. The eyes of the eagle had become transformed into those of the dove; all the pain and the passion had disappeared and in their place there had come for the second time a look of something like pity. "Forgive me if I spoke hastily; let us go in."

The dinner was concluded with rather less ceremony than usual, for the old Count knew de Hauteville had just returned from Raymond, one of the four great captains who were to lead the Crusade, and himself an enthusiast, he, too, was impatient to hear the news. At the table, with Guibert at her side and Lacey directly opposite, Minette had scarcely spoken, nor had she once dared to lift her eyes, but there was a feeling of heavenly rest coming over her and a voice which she alone could hear whispered in her heart—wait.

One or two neighboring nobles and several knights were present, for the Count was noted for his hospitality, and, dinner over, the company assembled in the large salon overlooking the park. A sweet fragrance floated in through the open windows. The sun now setting had for an hour been flirting with scattering clouds, tinting their edges with silver and gold, and these were now

moving forward like the skirmishers of an advancing army, while electric sheets lighted up the entire western horizon at intervals, betraying the storm-laden banks behind.

All eyes were now upon de Hauteville, who without any further solicitation began at once:

"Great indeed would be my happiness if I brought you good news, but it is because I bear tidings of a great disaster that I am hurrying back, and must leave tomorrow for my own command; for the whole army must get in readiness to move forward quickly and as one man strike with an unyielding arm for the glory of the Lord and the succor of His children. You will remember that the unbounded enthusiasm of Peter could not brook the delay necessary for the equipment of an organized army under experienced leaders, and that against the council of the holy father he, together with the knight Walter Hannought, whom we often speak of as Walter the Penniless, the German priest, Gottschalk, and Count Enrico from Mayence, set out in March. One of the survivors of this ill-advised expedition has just returned with sad news.

"It seems that Walter led the advance—neither he nor Peter having made the slightest provision for the men, women and children under their command, if indeed they could be called commanders. Walter, of whom we know little, save that he was brave and full of devotion, led some twenty thousand, and when they reached Hungary their repeated pillaging to obtain food aroused the ire of the people. King Carloman declared war upon them, and the Bulgarians, increasing the force of their enemies, the army was defeated and scattered in every direction. Numbers of them found refuge in a church, to which the Bulgarians set fire and many perished in the flames. Walter escaped by hiding in the forest and finally with a few man-

aged to find his way to Constantinople. When Peter arrived at Malleville,* his followers, ignorant of what had befallen Walter, saw the arms and crosses of the dead Crusaders hanging on the battlements, for it was here they made their last desperate stand. They were filled with such righteous indignation that in their rage they assaulted the city and killed nearly all of its seven thousand inhabitants. Peter was powerless to stay the slaughter, which was accompanied by every kind of rioting and excess.

"Meanwhile Carloman marched against them with a large army, and at the river Sane the Turcomans killed and drowned many. At Nissa they commenced an attack in spite of the earnest entreaties of Peter, even of his threats, and after a fierce conflict nearly half their number were slain and those who were left alive fled, leaving their arms on the ground. All the following night Peter wandered about forsaken by his people, sustained alone by his faith, and after many dangers he too arrived at Constantinople with scarcely half his command, without arms or food. The meeting with Walter was a sad one.

"Worse still was the fate of Gottschalk, who led some fifteen thousand from Eastern France and Bavaria. Arriving in Hungary, they were immediately attacked, and such few as escaped massacre returned to their homes.

"Count Enrico, with a larger following—some say as many as two hundred thousand,—but this could hardly be,—had a still worse fate, but with him the holy Crusade seems to have been but a pretext for plunder, for his army began an infamous record even before they had passed the confines of their own land. In trying to force a passage over the Danube at Meersburg they attacked the city

* Now Semlin.

and had already made several breaches in its walls when an unaccountable panic seized them. Seeing their confusion, Carloman assaulted them with his entire army and there was a dreadful slaughter. For many days the Danube was red with blood, and the dead bodies were floating down the stream or piled up in heaps on its banks. No one knows the number of those who perished on that day. Count Enrico escaped to his castle in Germany, but nothing has since been heard of the multitude of his followers, nor is it likely any are alive save the few who escaped to tell the story.

"Peter and the knight Walter were in a sad plight. Camped in front of Constantinople, they were without food. The Emperor Alexius seemed hardly determined what should be his attitude toward them. With apparently very little interest in the Crusade, he was, however, willing enough the little band should hurl itself against his old enemy who had seized nearly all his Asiatic possessions, but he hesitated about furnishing assistance necessary for them if they were to go forward, and he even neglected, as it would seem purposely, to supply them food for their immediate need. Thus there were presented to them two alternatives: To die of starvation, or plunder the neighboring cities, subjects of Alexius. They chose the latter and plundered and rioted to such an extent that the Emperor, desiring nothing so much as to get rid of them, furnished them arms and vessels to carry them across the Bosphorus, believing, no doubt, they would be quickly disposed of on the other side.

"This is all that is now known. What have been their further sufferings, if indeed any of them are yet alive, we may only conjecture. But the horrors that have attended this first ill-advised expedition have only increased the zeal of those who are now forming into a real army.

Count Raymond has just received a message from Godfrey de Bouillon saying he would start next month and requesting him to confer by messenger with Bohemond and follow him with both armies as quickly as possible. I have been honored with a message, and with your permission, Count, shall start again on my journey in the morning. From the day I listened to the majestic eloquence of the holy father at Clermont my heart has been filled with devotion to this noble cause, but my visit to Count Raymond was a revelation.

"The grand old soldier related to me how the hated Moslem first captured the Holy City; how after four months of starvation the good patriarch Sophronius was obliged to surrender, and all the temples and sacred attractions of Christian faith that adorned the home of Christianity were dishonored by profane hands; how the Saracen carried his conquering arms along the southern shores of the Mediterranean, fixing all the while his covetous eyes upon the cities across the blue waters; how the infamy of Count Julian introduced him into Spain; how the army of the Goths met with a terrible defeat and King Roderic was drowned in the Gaudalquivir; how in their mad pride they crossed the Pyrenees and defeated the Duke of Aquitaine in our own beloved France, and then, thank God, how they were met by Charles Martel, who was then mayor of the palace of Theodoric, and who, nerved by the conviction that upon him and his splendid followers, Franks, Germans, Burgundians and Romans, there rested the terrible responsibility for the continued existence of our glorious Christianity, and aided by divine power, so hammered the Moslem host that never again has their insolent ambition moved against the grandeur of European Christianity. Here on this very spot, the battle was fought, and in your beautiful park, Count, is where a

brave body of Franks, striking down all before them, penetrated to the very center of the Moslem army. The whole of the beautiful plain nearly all the way to Tours was covered with Moslem dead. I wish I could relate to you all the interesting detail in the eloquent words of the Count. I shall never forget the scene when at the conclusion of his story he solemnly declared he would never return to France, but would devote the remainder of his life to Christian service in the home of the Redeemer, and his beautiful young wife exclaimed, 'In France or in Palestine, where you are, I will be with you.' I was so affected that in their presence I made a vow never to return from the holy land until the sword of the Turk no longer guards the entrance to the Holy Sepulchre."

The guests present had been visibly affected by the young man's recital, and as he concluded the Count came forward and shook his hand, saying, "Monsieur de Hauteville, you have my esteem. I honor your noble sentiment. I wish I too was a wearer of the cross. After all, I am not older than Raymond!"

Lights had not yet been brought, and the shadows of the deepening twilight were very grateful to Minette, for they covered the emotions she could not control as she listened with pride and love to the voice that had become so dear to her, and that had expressed a thought of such noble devoted loyalty.

Let the man of the world and the woman of society say what they will, a woman, whether she be pure and lovely as God fashioned her, or whether she has lost the sweetness and the bloom of maiden innocence, loves those qualities in man which are brave, pure, noble, devoted and manly.

Rumbling of distant thunder, frequent flashes across the sky and scurrying clouds warned the little company

of the near approach of the storm, and one by one the guests departed. Guibert reluctantly followed the Count into the library at the latter's request to consult upon some business matters connected with the estate, and for the first time Lacey and Minette were alone.

What a strangely inconsistent thing is the human heart, and how curiously do the sentiments of hope, ecstasy and fear struggle for supremacy in the beginning of love. For a week Lacey had lived on hope; during the past hour Minette had been in an ecstasy of love, and now this brave young man whose sword would soon be flashing among the scimetars and lances of the Turks, and this trusting young woman whose delight would have been to be alone with him forever, were afraid.

For a moment there was a silence broken only by a few rain drops that were now beginning to patter among the broad leaves of the tree in front of the window where Minette was sitting. Then Lacey approached nearer. He was to depart in the morning; there was no probability he could return before leaving with the army for the Crusade, perhaps never. He could not go until the words of Minette had confirmed what her eyes had already told him. "Mademoiselle Minette," he began, "I—shall I not lower the window?"

"Thank you, no; I rather enjoy the storm."

"I must leave in the morning, perhaps before you rise, and I wanted to speak to you; to tell you—"

"And must you really go so soon? Can you not remain with us a little while, even a day, Monsieur de Hauteville?"

"De Hauteville? Ah! can you not say 'Lacey,' at least tonight?"

"If you do 'Minette'; and you will stay then, just a little while, a day?"

"Ever since that night when I looked into your eyes, the night we first met, when the enthusiasm of a common devotion seemed to me to carry us along through the acquaintance of years, your image, your face, your sweet soul has been forever with me. The rosy light of the morning sun brought me a greeting from you; all day long, 'Minette,' 'Minette,' was whispered by the leaves of the trees and sung by the forest birds, and at night the soft shadows covered my heart with a mantle of peace. It was this I wanted to tell you, and to ask you if you could not say once, just once, 'I love you, Lacey, a little, a very little.'"

"I love you, dear Lacey," then as she repeated the words they sounded in her own ears the sweetest music she had ever uttered, and when he took her hand and held it very quietly there rested upon her beautiful face an expression of perfect happiness, unclouded for the moment by doubt or fear, by a single thought not in harmony with divine love. One moment of the perfect fullness of life and love! It never came again, quite the same, never again.

The cynic has asked is life worth living. Let him ask himself if he has ever loved and his question is answered. Not the love that harbors passion, pride, self; but the altruism which modifies, softens, delights; an altruism out of which humanity is elevated to a higher plane; the crowning mystery of evolution.

As she repeated the loving words Minette had involuntarily risen, and then, her hands softly resting within Lacey's, she continued, "And you will not go tomorrow?"

The rain dashed against the window and the wind swayed and bent the branches of the great tree till its leaves shivered against the glass; brilliant lines of fire rent the black storm clouds and illumined the sky, and

the thunder, sounding a minute ago in distant peals, now became a booming roar, as approaching nearer and nearer, it more quickly followed the lightning's flash. And Minette shivered a little, instinctively drawing nearer till her head almost touched his shoulder and her heart beat against his own.

For a moment Lacey did not answer. Love and peace, the calm majesty of which defied the fury of the storm, rested upon them both. Immeasurable happiness today! what of tomorrow?

Then very low, he began: "Dearly beloved, when I feel your hands in mine, when I look into your eyes, my heart says stay, stay forever; a voice whispers in my soul, stay, you have gathered to your bosom a flower; stay and enjoy its fragrance; the spirit of the storm says stay, you have uncovered a heart; stay and shelter it. And then another voice speaks; dare I say its words give me pain, and yet 'tis true. It says, You have been honored by the cross you wear and have promised, have sworn you would bear it in the Crusade. If you are false to a heavenly vow can you be true to a human love? And are you not already in God's service? Can the messenger tarry when a day may cost perhaps a thousand lives? Love bids me stay; duty commands me to go at once. Love filled my soul with harmony; duty—ah! what is it?"

When Lacey commenced, the face of Minette was a picture of supreme happiness. Every line of her countenance expressed confidence, trust, love, rest. Her soft brown eyes looked into his own as if they would print upon his soul the indelible memory of her devotion. As he continued, her expressive features changed; first as a passing shadow of some half-remembered dream; then the slightly parted lips were pressed together, the lines of her mouth deepened, and her beautiful eyes, now less soft and bright,

were looking within; and as he uttered the word 'duty,' emotions of dread, fright, pain, despair, swept over her as she slowly sank away from him.

"Duty! you said duty! I had forgotten. I thought only of our love, only of my happiness. Forgive me. I am a woman. You are a man, and you remembered. It was wrong for me to love you, wrong to let you love me. You must go to your duty, I to mine. I should have told you before; then I would not have pained your dear, noble heart. Monsieur Lacey, many years ago my father and the Count Luis promised each other their bond of friendship should be perpetuated in the marriage of their children; Monsieur Guibert and myself. Our betrothal has been duly acknowledged before the bishop in the convent at Tours. I have promised and—and you have pointed out my duty. Ah! what is duty? Do we owe nothing to ourselves? Can our hearts be true, our emotions pure, if we are but the passive instruments of others' will?"

"Something of this I suspected; but does Guibert love you?"

"He has never spoken of love. His pride is satisfied with me. His father's estate, never large, has become reduced, and as I shall be my father's heir, this marriage will vastly increase his wealth and title."

"Then, dear Minette, you are mine alone. Love is the law of God, against which the laws of man, even though they seem to have the sanction of the church, cannot prevail. In that one hour our love sprang from our loyal devotion to His service. I will never give you up. I will go now into this Crusade with a greater courage, for I shall fight for you. Your love will give strength to my arm, and be my shield of defense. I will strike such blows against the infidels as will come to the knowledge of the

holy father. Bohemond has influence over him, and my cousin Tancred will ask the Count to intercede for us."

"But, oh! thousands will be slain in those dreadful battles, and if anything should happen to you what would become of me?"

"Nothing will happen. We shall meet again when the golden city is ours, and in that meeting we shall be united, never again to separate. I know it. Last night I should have remained at Chatearoux, but I wished to arrive here early that I might have more time with you. I came on ten miles this side, ten miles nearer to you. There was no inn nearer than Colombiers, so I stopped at the home of a peasant. He was very poor and of course unlettered, but he had acquired and remembered a good deal of information from passing friars and even surprised me with many questions I was unable to answer. I retired early to my bed of straw, which was all he could offer me, and, thinking of you, of my present mission and of the Crusade, it was many hours before I slept. And during the night there came to me a vision. It seemed to me the conflict was over, that the glory of the Lord was re-established in His holy city. Everywhere I looked there were bodies of the dead, Christian, Saracen and Turk, but more Saracen and Turk. I passed on silently, heeding them not, nor the multitude of Christian knights who were shouting victory. Out of that scene of blood and horror I was seeking you. In the distance was a bright light as if it were the flashing of a thousand swords, and I saw you there. My own sword seemed to be whirling and flashing as I ran to you. Then you saw me and in a moment we were together and I held you in my arms. I heard no voice, no sound, but in my heart I felt that we were united, united never more to part. Then there seemed to be a mist, and in the mist the vision vanished.

Beloved, I am sure the bright light around you was the brightness and beauty and love that will be about you on our wedding day, and it is to be when the Crusade ends in the capture of Jerusalem." And taking her hands again in his own, he exclaimed:

"Your father loves you; he will not force your wishes with undue haste. Promise me you will not marry Guibert till I return."

Again the fair head rests upon his shoulder; again the loving heart beats against his own; again the soft, trusting eyes look into his as the answer comes, "I will never marry any one but you, dear Lacey. If you come not back to me, there is one refuge; I promise."

In that instant the room was enveloped in a sheet of flame, followed by a crash that shook the house to its foundations. Shrinking closer to Lacey, Minette trembled, but it was not fear of the storm. Looking toward the hall, that sheet of flame had revealed to her the figure of Guibert standing in the doorway, his face whiter than the lightning's flash. Crash after crash now followed the repeated electric illuminations, but Guibert had disappeared.

Slowly the storm passed onward, the rain still pattered against the window, but the wind ceased and the branches of the great tree no longer beat against the house.

"They are bringing lights, dear Lacey, and my father will soon return to wish you God speed, for his heart is with the Crusaders. It is better I should retire."

"Will you not ring for your maid?"

"No, I would rather be alone. I am not afraid. Goodnight. Your words have made me brave. I will no longer doubt; and, oh! may my love be your defense, as you said, in the dread days of battle. The days will be long and my heart will be sore, but I will believe in you,

in God and in your vision. The brightness and beauty and love will come to us just as the calmness and peace has come after the storm. Go in the morning, Lacey. Go early; and, dear heart, do not meet Guibert again. Good-night! Good-night!" and turning her face to his, there was one moment of happiness they never forgot in all the long days that followed. Then turning, she passed out of the room just as the Count entered.

The heart of Lacey warmed and beat with new hope as he listened to the kind wishes of the brave old noble. Then talking a few minutes of the plans of the three armies for meeting and his own company of knights, and thanking the Count for his hospitality, he entered the hall and started toward his own apartment. Half way down the long corridor he was met by Guibert, who stood with folded arms waiting his approach. For a moment the two faced each other without speaking. Then Guibert remarked:

"I shall walk early in the morning, in the park, down by the bend in the river; perhaps Monsieur de Hauteville would like to keep me company, and bring his sword with him."

Such an invitation at any other time and by any other man would have been answered instantly, but now Lacey hesitated. Had he a right to risk his life in a personal quarrel when by the most solemn obligation his service was promised in the Crusade? Should he be slain what would become of Minette? If he should kill Guibert would not the gulf between them be widened? Would not the Count become his enemy, and would not Minette herself, horrified at the tragedy, lose her love in the sense of remorse?

"Perhaps," Guibert continued with a sarcastic sneer,

"Monsieur de Hauteville is afraid of wetting his feet in the grass after the storm."

Then, looking at him calmly, without emotion, without a trace of passion, Lacey replied:

"Walk as early as you please, Monsieur de Barreaux, I will not keep you waiting."

CHAPTER II

THE DUEL

SUNRISE after the storm! Sunrise in France. The rain drops, still on the trees, glisten in the rosy light. Brilliant flowers are bursting with fragrance and joyous birds fill the air with glad music.

At the farther edge of the park, down where the placid river turns abruptly northward, is a magnificent chestnut, under whose symmetrical branches a young man walks back and forth. A light cloak, such as was commonly worn by the nobility at that time, covers his shoulders, and a long sword hangs by his side. True to his promise, Lacey was first at the spot to which he had been so unceremoniously invited the evening before. He had slept little during the early hours of the night, for his thoughts had been busy with that new and delightful influence which had impressed upon his heart the seal of a nobler manhood, and with no little anxiety as to the issue of the morning's encounter, which he instinctively felt would be pressed to the utmost by his adversary.

A month before such a meeting would have been but a morning's pastime; now, how gladly would he have avoided it had it been possible.

Still occupied by these thoughts he had not noticed the figure that emerged from the shaded walk until Guibert stood before him, armed with a weapon similar to his own.

For a moment the two men faced each other in silence, then Guibert spoke.

"I regret that I am so sound a sleeper as to have given Monsieur just reason for impatience."

"Monsieur de Barreaux, let us dispense with unnecessary words. I have but just arrived and am not impatient. You have done me the honor, or have offered me the indignity—accept whichever term you choose—of inviting me to this spot for a purpose which cannot be misunderstood. Before satisfying your desire I have a right to ask why?"

"Ah! I am entertained. Monsieur desires an explanation. Frenchmen are accustomed to fight first and explain afterwards, but I forget, Monsieur has dwelt so long in Italy he has forgotten his French; he has learned diplomacy."

"Your words do not annoy, neither do they irritate me, nor do I intend to disappoint your desire. If I have learned to curb my temper, I have at least the advantage of Monsieur. If you are ashamed or afraid to honor my request, draw your weapon and let us finish, for I have already wasted valuable time and should be upon my journey;" and unsheathing his own sword and throwing his cloak over his left arm, Lacey awaited the attack of his adversary.

A look of savage delight lighted up the dark face of Guibert, who had spent many years at the court of the profligate king Philip I, and had there been trained in the use of the sword by the great Dumay himself, the most skillful teacher in France. He had already fought several duels, in all of which he had been victorious, without the slightest accident to himself, and as he now drew his own weapon, a somewhat longer

one than that of Lacey, he felt that he was perfectly master of the situation.

Notwithstanding his assurance, however, his hand trembled slightly as he rested the point of his sword for a moment on the ground. His confident bearing could not entirely conceal the passion by which he was controlled, and he now exclaimed:

"Monsieur de Hauteville, you are not ignorant of the cause which made it necessary for me to demand your presence here. No one better than yourself knows the infamy of your conduct. It can only be expiated in this manner. You need give no further thought to your journey, for you are looking upon the morning sunlight for the last time. In another hour, instead of hastening toward the Crusade, in which you have pretended such an interest, your body will be floating down the river. Our quarrel is mortal."

All the while these passionate words were being spoken Lacey stood in a posture of defense. Not a muscle of his face had moved, nor did he make any reply, and when at their conclusion Guibert commenced the combat with a quick and furious lunge he sprang aside and parried so deftly that his assailant was carried past him by the force of his movement, striking the great chestnut which sent a shower of rain drops upon them both.

Quickly recovering himself, Guibert gazed upon his opponent with surprise. Believing himself invincible, he had intended to begin and end the combat with one determined thrust. That it should be so easily turned aside seemed incredible. He realized, however, that his carelessness had exposed himself to a return thrust, which could easily have been made effective had Lacey taken advantage of it. He perceived, too, that while his adversary was absolutely master of his emotion, his own

nerve was weakened by passion, and comprehending now that he was opposed by a skill equal to his own, he renewed the conflict with greater caution, but no less determined as to its final result.

At the very moment that Lacey, decided by the insulting expressions of Guibert the evening before, uttered those impressive words: "Walk as early as you please, I will not keep you waiting," he had determined on the course he would pursue in the affair of the morning. Taught in the exercise of the sword by Tancred, a master fully as adroit and far more vigorous than Dumay, he was confident of his own strength and had resolved to act on the defensive until he had carefully tested all the resources of his opponent. And now, Guibert, realizing he was in front of one in every way his equal, the two stood a few yards apart, their swords nearly on a level, their breath a little quicker, their pulse a beat more rapid, every muscle braced, every nerve set, watching the other's every motion of eye and hand.

Then the battle began again, Guibert still resolute and determined, advancing, and attempting to beat down the guard of Lacey and force him backward toward the river, and Lacey, no less resolute, easily parrying every stroke and swiftly changing position to defeat the intentions, but never returning the thrusts of his adversary.

For many minutes the fight thus continued without results. Not a drop of blood had been shed. Expecting an easy victory Guibert was exasperated that all his most skillful thrusts had been turned aside by one he had believed to be a mere novice in the use of the sword. Again trembling with passion he redoubled his efforts. Feint, thrust and cut followed each other in rapid succession. A dozen times his temper exposed him to a return which might easily have been made fatal. The

morning air, so recently musical with the song of birds, the hum of bees and the lowing of cattle, now rang with the angry clash of swords as they constantly crossed each other.

There was one trick with the sword of which Guibert believed he was master. It was a secret of Dumay, and he was one of the few to whom it had been taught. He was breathing rapidly and realized that his passionate efforts were exhausting his strength. The conflict must be decided quickly. Collecting all his energy, he made a sudden feint to the left; then quickly raised his sword and aimed a savage blow at his opponent's head. Lacey promptly threw up his weapon. The blow was another feint, and in an instant came the real movement—a quick, terrible thrust straight at his exposed breast.

Had Lacey been less alert, less vigorous, that moment would have been his last on earth. All the while during that desperate conflict he had looked straight into Guibert's eyes, and by an intelligent movement, so slight as to be divined rather than perceived, he detected the thrust that was coming. Springing aside he caught the point of Guibert's sword in his cloak and then with a sudden forward movement he bent it nearly double, while with a swift upward stroke of his own weapon he caught it near the hilt and wrenching it from Guibert's hand, hurled it twenty feet away.

The conflict was ended. Only for a moment he looked at Guibert, who, thus disarmed, had sprung backward with a cry of rage and mortification, and then quietly returning his sword to its sheath, he walked away without a word.

Arrived at the chateau he found Minette waiting. She had risen early, for she could not let him go without one last word and look of love. He was glad she

did not suspect, nor question where he had been; glad, too, that Guibert did not return, and partaking with her alone, for the Count had not yet made his appearance, the warm morning meal her love had had prepared, he took her soft hand, held it a moment within his own, living in that one brief second an eternity of love and pain; then raising it to his lips he impressed upon it a kiss of loving tenderness and holding her close to his heart, in low and gentle voice he whispered: "Do not grieve when I am gone, or my heart will be sad and my arm weak in the day of battle. The months of our separation may be long and weary, but think, they will be but moments compared with the years of our happiness in the future."

With these words and with one last fond look he again pressed her hand to his lips, held it a moment tightly against his heart, and passing out, mounted his horse which was already waiting him at the door, waved a final adieu as the noble animal gracefully backed away; then turning, he sped forward on his long journey, every little while looking back and waving his hat to the loved one still standing in the spot where he had left her, and as the road now approached an intervening ridge which shut off the view of the chateau he beheld for the last time, she seemed in the distance to be extending her arms toward him. Real or imagined, it was a picture he never forgot, and all that long day as he rode swiftly along, the events of years seemed to be crowded into the memories of that week.

At the moment of parting Minette had made no reply to his last words of tender love and hope. In all that was before him, all the toil and danger he would endure before they would meet again, she would not have his heart burdened with the memory of her grief and was

struggling with her emotion. She could not speak, for her heart was tightened and her throat choked as by a vice. Words would not come, and her dark, tender, expressive eyes alone answered him. Bravely she tried to smile each time he turned, then breathlessly hoping he would look back once more; till as he was about to disappear behind the long ridge a sudden fright came over her, and extending her arms toward him, she cried out:

"Lacey, come back! Ah, I shall never see him again!"

CHAPTER III

LOUISE

WHILE these events of such special interest were taking place in Touraine there were busy scenes in the camps of the Crusaders. At Nancy and Verdun, Godfrey de Bouillon, Duke of Lorraine, was marshaling his forces. In Flanders, Count Robert, and in Normandy, the son of William the Conqueror, Duke Robert, were already on the way to his camp, and from Burgundy, Champaign, Bethel, Artois and Picardy there were daily arriving hosts of knights and yeoman soldiery all fully armed, all wearing the Crusader's cross. In the south the lords and knights of the southern countries were congregating under the banners of Count Raymond at Toulouse, and to these great military camps, one in the south under Raymond, and the other in the north under Godfrey, all the knights and nobles of France whose pious zeal or whose ambition led them to turn their faces toward Jerusalem, were congregating.

Nowhere in Europe could there have been found more noble commanders, grander leaders than Godfrey and Raymond. Both men of military genius; both of ex-

alted character, both of extreme piety. From his father, Count Eustace, Godfrey inherited a love of battle, and from his mother, Ida de Bouillon, piety and letters. There was no woman in France gentler in disposition than the Countess, no man delighting more in the fray and the chance of battle than the Count, his father. In Godfrey each of these qualities were firmly planted; each balanced the other. Pious monks, men of letters and brave commanders, each alike sought his favor.

In all of France there was at that time no strong central government. Under the feudal system the great noble and the small despot ruled throughout their domain according to the number of followers they could control. Aided by the zealous Peter, Pope Urban had started the religious Crusade, and all the smaller and intermediate leaders in France had, as by common consent, placed themselves and their following under the two great generals who were recognized as being from their inherent virtues strong and able leaders. Raymond was lord of Toulouse, Castras, Foix and all of Languedoc. He was the wealthiest of all the chiefs of the Crusade, if not the richest lord in France. He was well advanced in years, and could have had no other motive in entering the Crusade than religious zeal. He had many times fought and beaten the Moors in Spain, and with all his soul he entered upon the expedition, believing it to be in the service of God.

The days of that memorable summer passed rapidly, and on the fifteenth of August the splendid army of Godfrey, of eighty thousand infantry and ten thousand mounted knights, marched out of Verdun with banners flying, every knight and soldier decorated with the red cross of the Crusade. All over France the news was quickly heralded, and as messengers sped from city to

city there were ringing of bells and joy and gladness, and all the churches were filled with enthusiasts, whose prayers followed the armed hosts of glory.

Alas! how few of all that splendid army ever returned.

A few days afterward Minette was sitting in her room by the window which looked out along the road that Lacey had traveled southward the morning of his departure. There, by the great chestnut, he had held her hand in both of his and touched it with his lips; outside the gate he had turned; farther on at the spring; again as he passed over the little knoll, and entered the grove. At all these places he had waved his hat, and then, there, farther on, was the long ridge beyond which that brave, loving heart had disappeared.

Every day since Lacey's departure, she had in this spot lived over and over again that parting scene; all its love, all its pain. Rising now, her heart was touched by the comfort of a new hope, and remembering his parting words, "do not grieve when I am gone, or my heart will be sad," she exclaimed:

"I will no longer live in the past; the present has its duties—I will try to meet them bravely. What happiness if my loving thoughts could help him!" Turning away, she was suddenly encircled by two loving arms, and a pair of warm, rosy lips were pressed to her own.

"Louise!"

"I have been looking for you everywhere; came all the way from Tours this morning to spend a day with you before I go away."

"Away, Louise? Where are you going?"

"That's just it! Prepare to be surprised. Imagine me doing such a thing. Minette, I am going to the Crusade."

"Going to the—you, Louise, you who have called Peter a mad enthusiast; you who have so often chided me for my sympathy with the cause; you who have spoken of it as a blind fanaticism; you going to the Crusade?"

"All quite true, and more. I don't wonder you stare at me. You are astonished, of course; so am I. Listen! My mother was a Norman. Robert Guiscard, who established the Norman influence in Italy, was my grandfather. When my father died my mother found a home with my Uncle Bohemond, and I was sent to Tours that my education might be finished in France. There our acquaintance led to friendship, then ripened into love. Oh! those happy days! Will such moments ever come again? Bohemond will lead the Norman army from Italy, and the noble Tancred, of whom I have heard so much but have never seen, will be his lieutenant. My mother is as great an enthusiast as yourself, and last week I received a letter from her saying she was going with Bohemond, and asking me to come home at once and get ready to accompany her. Day after tomorrow I am to leave for Nantes, from whence I shall sail next week on a vessel bound for Naples, where my cousin Lacey will meet me, and it is but a short distance from there to Taranto."

"How I have missed you, dear Louise, these weeks we have been separated! How I had hoped we might soon be together again! and now I must lose you. All the brightness of life vanishes before me, leaving only a shadow."

"Behind the shadow hope and love remain. I am trying to believe both are real. Others who know me see only the ripples that come to the surface. You alone, Minette, have seen the still deep waters below. An un-

accountable foreboding of something dreadful that is to happen, in which we are to be associated, oppresses me. It seems to grow out of the Crusade. Perhaps this is why I have instinctively opposed it; or, perhaps, and I hope it is because of this oppression that my heart is burdened by a dread of something that shall prove to be unreal. It all seems to me so wrong; such an infatuation, such a reproach to our Christianity; don't interrupt me, dear, I know I am talking treason to the church, but all the horror of what is to come is continually pictured out in my soul.

"It is true that among us all is a deep and sincere sorrow that the land where our Redeemer first appeared, the place where He was born, the city where He suffered, are possessed by those who despise our faith; but now that He is no longer at Bethlehem, Cana, Nazareth, Capernaum, or Jerusalem; now that He no longer walks along the Jordan, that His loving voice is no longer heard upon the Mount of Beatitudes, His gentle mercy no longer manifested at Bethesda and Bethany and Jericho, His sweet charity no longer witnessed through Judea, Samaria and Galilee; now that in the agony at Gethsemane and the tragedy at Golgotha His mission to humanity was accomplished, and He lives in all His love and beauty, and charity and mercy, in our hearts; even here in our beloved France, is not Jerusalem, is not all of Palestine, an empty shell? Remember, too, dear Minette, that the glory of our Saviour was in His love. If the sentiment that agitates France, if the zeal of the holy father were not a mistaken, misdirected thought, would it be unmindful of His words of mercy?

" 'Peace on earth?'

"A thousand years ago a terrible vengeance overtook Jerusalem. By slow degrees its walls, one after another,

were battered down and amidst shrieks and flame and suicide and massacre the city was taken by the power of Rome, and the grand temple destroyed, not one stone being left on another, and in that awful ruin a million human beings perished.

"Thank God, it was not accomplished by Christians!

"Do you not yourself tremble, Minette, at the destruction, ruin, misery and death that will result from the Crusade? I do not think of the enemies of our religion and race, though they, too, are human and will suffer, but of our own people. Already a hundred thousand have been swallowed up in that wave of death, and the real struggle not begun. Your heart has been full of the religious fervor; born out of a belief spread by Peter and fostered by the holy father, that it is God's will; but suppose in all the battles that will be fought, the dreadful grinding crash, the blows of battle axes, the swift arrows, the cruel lances and the cutting swords, there should be, among the heaps and heaps of slain, some one, perhaps, with dismembered limbs, his poor body rent and torn with shocking wounds, his life blood moistening the parched sands, his last emotion of agony, his last thought unspoken, his last look upon a scene of indescribable horror; some one whose life and love were as necessary to your very existence as is the bright sunshine to the fragrant rose."

"Oh! don't! don't!"

For a moment the great brown eyes were staring, the white delicate arms extended as if to push away some frightful spectre, and then, sinking into a chair, Minette covered her face and trembled with a despair her heart had never known before.

Kneeling beside her, Louise drew her head lovingly

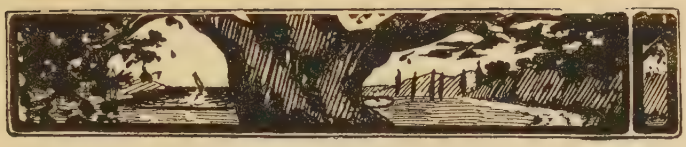
to her own; then resting it upon her shoulder, caressing it tenderly as a little mother, she exclaimed:

"Forgive me, dear Minette. I should have known your gentle, sensitive heart better. Let us talk of something more pleasant. How is Guibert? and have you yet settled on your wedding?"

Something pleasant! and Louise could not understand why her words only increased the agitation of Minette. A tear dropped on her hand; another, and Louise wondered. Then Minette rose, and looking at her friend earnestly, replied: "I shall not marry Guibert; at least, at least not now. I have promised not to marry till after the Crusade. Louise, it was you who brought Lacey to me. I have promised him. You are going to the Crusade. He is your cousin; I am your friend; you love me; if he is hurt or sick, you will care for him?"

"I will."

Silently the two girls walked to the window, and, looking out, saw the sun sinking below the western horizon, the sky red as though the world beyond were in flames.



CHAPTER IV

"I CANNOT, WILL NOT, BE YOUR WIFE"

GUIBERT, standing motionless on the scene of the duel, his sword on the ground and his heart filled with shame and rage at his defeat, watched Lacey until that retreating manly figure disappeared within the chateau; then picking up his weapon he gazed long and earnestly at it, exclaiming:

"Dishonored blade! you may yet be an assassin's tool."

Still on the same spot he witnessed that parting scene at the door and muttered: "Poor, zealous fool; you are going to the Crusade. You would seek glory; you shall find it in death."

The following afternoon he presented himself at the apartment of the Count, saying, after a few moments' conversation:

"Monsieur le Comte, I have called to ask your permission to return home at least for a short time, as I know there are some of the affairs of my father's estate, in the management of which he needs my assistance, and as I saw Minette going toward the arbor, will you pardon me for being abrupt, and allow me to seek her there, since I go so early, I may not be able to say adieu to her in the morning?"

"Go, my boy; everything here is as obedient to your wishes as though you were already my son. Minette has seemed a little sad of late, no doubt at being parted

from her friend since leaving the convent at Tours. Try and cheer her up."

Minette was sitting in the arbor. It was the first time she had been there since that evening when love had first touched the delicate chords of her heart with a tuneful hand. It seemed but yesterday. How beautiful he looked! how brave! how manly! how noble were his words! how his eyes, sparkling with generous emotion, meeting hers, had thrilled her! Sweet dream of a passing moment; then a shadow, a footstep, and Guibert stands before her. A little shiver as she remembers the face in the hall on the night of the storm; then, rising, she greets him quietly.

"I saw you coming to the arbor, and—and I am going away tomorrow. I came to say adieu. Will you walk with me in the park, Minette?"

"I hope you will not think me ungrateful for your kindness if I ask you to let me remain here, Monsieur Guibert? I was very tired in the house with the heat and came here to rest."

"I am sorry you are fatigued, and will not disturb your rest. When I come again I will hope you may not look unkindly upon such arrangements for our future as will give me happiness. Adieu, Minette. Try to think of me a little when I am gone," and taking her hand he held it a moment; then turning from the arbor he walked slowly back to the chateau.

For some minutes Minette remained standing. Her thoughts were busy. She could not understand Guibert's impassive manner. Not a word, not a line of his countenance betrayed his knowledge of her love for Lacey. Could it be that he had not heard; that he had not seen; that the passion she saw in his white face during

that instant flash was but fright of the storm? And she felt a little sorry for him.

About a week after the departure of Louise, a trader returning from Nantes brought Minette a letter from her, announcing that she would sail from that port the following day and promising another letter as soon after her arrival at Taranto as she could find a messenger. The same afternoon a carriage that had been slowly winding along the river road from Parthenay stopped in front of the chateau, and the Count Luis de Barreaux of Parthenay alighted and entered the house.

It was an unexpected visit and Count Renney of Touraine was all the more delighted to see his old friend. After refreshments had been brought the conversation quite naturally turned on the Crusade. Always interested, the Count of Touraine had become an enthusiast since Lacey had so graphically described his interview with Raymond.

"Old friend," he exclaimed, "twenty years ago there was not an expedition, a movement of any kind, from one end of France to the other, requiring courage, dash, skill, endurance, in which we were not chiefs among the leaders. Our swords were always drawn. Many a brush have we had south of the mountains with the Moors when they were pressing upon the Gascons and Aquitaine. Amid all this marshaling of men for the Crusade do you never have the old feeling come over you? Are you never tempted to break away from the scenes of these petty quarrels among petty chiefs and lead among those who will win for France the glory of Jerusalem? Are you never jealous of Raymond?"

"My dear friend," returned the Count of Parthenay, "your words do, indeed, bring back to me many noble memories of scenes in which brains, equally with our

courage and skill, gave us recognition among the peers of France, but pardon me, years and an experience at the court of Philip have given me greater wisdom. See you not that there is not a single crowned head in this Crusade? That it originates wholly with the insane Peter, who has nothing to lose; and with Urban, who has everything to gain? That there is no great central power interested in or leading it? That all the burden has been laid upon France alone? Think you, this has been without a motive on the part of Urban, who himself refused to lead the expedition?"

"Do you not forget Bohemond and the Normans in Italy? And have you not overlooked the fact that Godfrey and Raymond are as powerful central chiefs as Philip, even though he calls himself King of France? Could we expect the holy father to ask Philip to head a Crusade whose object in recovering the Holy Land is to strengthen and glorify our Christian religion, when he has defied the laws and mandates of the Church in a shameful marriage with the wife of the Count of Anjou, and is even now under sentence of excommunication?"

"And yet, bigot as he is, and austere, Raymond is not without human weakness, and has already been lord of three wives. He may conduct an army of perhaps two hundred thousand followers drawn together by his enormous wealth, into Palestine. Bohemond may have half as many more, but in all three of these armies there will be no one central organization, no single authority, no unity of purpose. The haughty Raymond will never yield to the greater military genius of Godfrey; and both will have to contend with the ambition of Bohemond, who has already won a double victory over the Greek Emperor, and would perhaps not disappoint the pleasure of the holy father, if, instead of directing his efforts

against the infidel, he should bring the Eastern Capital into obedience to Rome."

"I am willing to admit each of the three great armies are led by men of strong personality; nor will I deny the ambition of Bohemond, but can you not see that there is in the Christian zeal, that has drawn them and all their followers into this gigantic movement, a unity of purpose which must result in harmony of action? No, my friend, the Eastern and Western Church may settle their own differences in time, but whatever may be the desire of Alexius, I am sure the good Urban has no other thought than to restore to our Christian worship the soil our Saviour's footsteps have made sacred, the scenes of His miracles, the mountains upon which His words of love have been spoken, and the valleys that have been watered by His tears. But, tell me, how are things in Parthenay? and how is Guibert? I thought he did not seem quite well when he left us."

"Guibert is very well; a little less gay, perhaps, with which I am not sorry, for I fear he had become somewhat wild at court. It is, indeed, on his account I have given myself the pleasure of this visit. On his return home he immediately expressed to me a desire to consummate the marriage we arranged so long ago, and asked me to write you soliciting an early day for the wedding. I was too delighted to wait the delay of a messenger and came myself."

The union of Minette and Guibert had been settled so long ago that the Count had come to regard it as an event always in the future; but now that the proposition for an immediate marriage had come, and come so abruptly, he hesitated.

"Minette has but just returned from school," he said;

"she has seen nothing of society, is very young—well, perhaps you are right. I will speak to her tomorrow."

A man reasons a thing out and by a long mental process arrives at a conclusion, sometimes correct and sometimes not. A woman reaches conclusions intuitively, and they are generally correct. When Minette saw the portly form of the Count of Parthenay alight from his dusty carriage she understood the scene with Guibert in the arbor. That was his first move. The visit of the Count was the second, and her woman's intuition divined its mission. She was not surprised, therefore, the following morning at her father's request to come to his apartment, though her heart beat a little quicker as she entered the room.

The Count of Touraine was a man of determined will, but of equally strong affection. He would strike down a foe in battle fiercely as a lion tears his prey, and afterward bind up his wounds with all the tenderness of a mother. He was well along in middle life and Minette was the one tie left. He looked at her a few moments thinking of other days when her mother was fairest among the women of France and himself bravest among the nobles. Then passing his hand over her hair he said softly:

"You are very like your mother, Minette. You have her hair and eyes. She was very beautiful, but lovelier than her features was the sweetness of her soul. In you she lives again. Death took her from me; you, I am giving away. Never again shall I press to my bosom a flower so sweet as the two roses that have blossomed and shed their fragrance around my heart. You have been engaged to Guibert since a child. He wishes to take the position to which he is entitled in society, and the Count, his father, arrived yesterday to ask that the

wedding be celebrated at once. I had hoped, now that your education is complete, to have kept you with me at least a few years, but must yield my own desires to the happiness of yourself and Guibert. Go now to your room, dear child, and tell me tomorrow what day I shall set for the ceremony."

Putting her little hand affectionately within that of her father, Minette replied:

"I have been away all these years at the convent, away from home, away from your love. I have studied hard, for I wanted you to be proud of your daughter. Do not send me from you now. Let me stay a little while. I do not love Guibert yet; at least, not now."

"Love will come, as it should, after marriage, child."

"But, father, my heart is in the Crusade, and I have made a vow not to marry till its purpose is accomplished. You will not force me to break my vow? You will not drive me from you till then?" And kneeling down by his side, she placed her arms lovingly around his neck.

What father's heart could resist the eloquent gentleness of a daughter's love! And in his first move Guibert was overmatched. Minette had won. Very tenderly the Count's hand again stroked her soft hair, and then he replied:

"Have your own way, child; after all, it will be but a year. Guibert can wait. Yes, you are, indeed, very like your mother. Go now, and I will give the Count de Barreaux our answer; and, Minette, let us see you at dinner."

Notwithstanding his decision, the Count was not a little embarrassed when his old friend entered the room. Irresolution, however, was no part of his character, and without hesitation, he answered the inquiring glance.

"My dear Count," he said, "Minette must have a little

more time. Her request is, indeed, not unreasonable; she has just returned home, and, freed from the restraints and duties of the convent, it is but natural she should wish to enjoy her freedom, see a little of society, live for a time without care, among the flowers and the birds, before assuming a responsibility that will end only with life. Further than this, she has made a vow not to marry till the Crusade has delivered Jerusalem into Christian hands. A year will pass quickly. It can hardly be more, and she will be all the better wife for her Christian zeal."

The Count of Parthenay could not conceal a slight shade of disappointment, not unmixed with displeasure as he answered:

"But are you sure this is the real reason for delay? Minette has been away, and even here, is it not possible some unfortunate, some unforeseen attachment, unknown to you, may have arisen?"

For the moment Count Renney struggled with something like anger. In the suggestion of his friend, fatherly pride and confidence were attacked. Minette, who a moment before had knelt by his side, and through whose innocent eyes he had looked into an unclouded soul. Minette insincere! Impossible thought! And with something of haughtiness he replied:

"The intimation is unworthy of you, Count."

"I was wrong. Pardon me. For the moment a wise consideration of your words yielded to my solicitude for the disappointment of Guibert, who since his return home has talked of nothing else but his approaching happiness, his settlement on the estate and his hopes for the future. I felt so sure of your answer that I asked him to ride over, receive your kind assurance and accompany me on my return. He will be here this afternoon only

to learn that his present hopes are defeated. Bear with me, my friend; I, too, am a father."

Pleasant words; politic, too! They smoothed the ruffled brow of the Count of Touraine, who said with a smile:

"It will be all the more credit to the young man to bear kindly a delay which is but temporary. After all, the gratification of a sentiment, a wish, even though it may seem to be a whim, is a small price to pay for the love of a good woman."

It was with misgivings that in the early part of the afternoon Minette witnessed the arrival of Guibert, and soon after saw him, in company with his father, walk toward the park. It was clear to her mind at once that whatever he might know or suspect of her attachment to Lacey, Guibert had confided in the Count, and this move was the result of a carefully considered plan between them. Within her heart was a silent call for help. If Louise were but there! But Louise was sailing toward the blue waters of the Mediterranean, toward Lacey, who was soon to meet her. Then she thought of Lacey, whose brave heart was to conquer such perils, and with the thought there came a companion. The companion was love, and when at the call for dinner she went to meet those she now looked upon as her enemies, she felt stronger.

Guibert greeted her outwardly as usual; the Count de Barreaux was somewhat over-profuse in his compliments, and her father exerted himself rather more than ordinarily to make the hour a pleasant one. But the brightest sunshine does not penetrate the storm-laden cloud, and Minette was glad enough when the dinner hour was over and she was permitted to retire.

It was the most pleasant time of the day, just before sunset, and that she might be alone with her thoughts and escape the discordant influences, and the feeling of dread which she could not shake off in the presence of, or in the house with Guibert and his father, she walked out, taking the path that led along the river through the park.

A few minutes' walk brought her to the big chestnut at the bend of the river. It was the noblest tree in the park and its widely extending symmetrical branches and abundant foliage offered a grateful shade in which she stopped a moment to enjoy the delicious air. Then she turned toward some roses out in the sunlight. 'Twas only a step, but as she reached them a figure pushed aside the flowers beyond and Guibert stood before her, glowering.

Strange she should have taken the path that led to the chestnut! Strange she should meet Guibert there in the very spot where he and Lacey had fought; and yet, happy she did not know. She felt a little choking in her throat, her heart almost stopped its beating; then rushed on with spasmodic jerks; then nearly stopped again, and her limbs seemed powerless to sustain her body, slender and delicate as it was. But it was only the momentary startled surprise, together with the instantaneous instinctive consciousness of what the next few minutes must determine. Then, every trace of agitation vanished, she looked at him calmly, resolved that whatever might be the consequences, he should not go away from that meeting deceived or deceiving himself as to their future relations.

It was this interview that Guibert had planned and in which his father had concurred during their conversation soon after Guibert's arrival. He had seen her take

the path by the river and he at once started on the walk that led past the arbor, knowing he would be certain to meet her. He was a little startled to find her at the scene of the duel. Did she know? Shame at the possible thought increased his irritation. And then he witnessed her agitation and believed himself the master. Many a man has made the same mistake, and will again.

He began in a lordly way. "We were engaged, Minette, many years ago."

"So I was told."

"And we afterward acknowledged our engagement and our obligation before the Church."

"I was so instructed. I was a child, and I obeyed."

"You were then sent to school at the convent, where for five years you have had no other thought than when you completed your studies we were to be married."

"These are but meaningless words. Speak of what you have come to say. I am listening."

"They are words that should direct your thoughts toward duty."

"Then they are not needed. A greater influence than yours has so directed them."

"I do not understand you, but I know that before the Bishop of Tours you promised to be my wife, and every woman in France knows the sacred character of an espousal."

"And if I could not love you, would you still insist?"

"I would insist upon your fidelity. You asked me to speak what I had to say. Listen, then! I saw you leave the chateau. You thought to escape me, to be alone. I took the opposite walk through the park knowing I should meet you. I came to ask of you, to demand of you the fulfilment of our marriage contract. You have deceived your father, but you cannot deceive me. The

court of Philip and all France knows of our engagement. Think you I will submit to the unspoken sentiment of reproach I should feel around me when it was known, and known why you had refused to complete your vows? This marriage and its entailment—I speak plainly—has been the one aim of my life. Think you I will permit the wall of expectations I have built around me to go down in irreparable destruction?"

A quick look of intelligence passed over Minette's face. He had spoken the word that relieved her from every sense of moral obligation.

"Entailment!" she exclaimed. "Then you do not even pretend it is love that animates you?"

"Love is an unsubstantial shadow, a sentiment of woman, a passion of beardless youth, a theme for bards and poets. Men deal in qualities that are real, in conditions that are practical. We are wasting time. My future life is at stake. Your honor is in the balance. I ask you now, will you fulfil the obligation that has been placed upon you by your father, by your own solemn act, and by the rites of the holy church? Do not seek further to evade this question. You must answer it here and now."

Thus had the opportunity she most of all desired, and yet dreaded, been forced upon her. Her breath came a little more quickly, but controlling the quiver of excitement that agitated her delicate frame and looking at him steadily, she replied:

"Nor do I wish to evade it. I am sorry if I disappoint your expectations, sorry if I give you pain; more than all sorry if I draw to myself your anger. You tell me love is a sentiment; then it is a sentiment from which springs every generous impulse; upon which is founded every noble ambition. In its presence the dullest stone

is polished. Removed from its influence the brilliant diamond is dimmed. The ceremony of our betrothal was but a form of the church, a form instituted by man. In the delicate lines of love, God writes His law upon the heart. Monsieur Guibert, I cannot, will not, be your wife."

There are shades so dense the brightest sunlight never penetrates them, but turned aside it diffuses its warmth and beauty over the fields and among the flowers beyond. Even so the imperious character of Guibert repelled the exalted thought and eloquent words of Minette. The closing line alone impressed him. He had demanded an answer, and in that line it had been given without equivocation or evasion. To Minette deceit was impossible; her reply had left nothing for tomorrow, and as he stood there in the silence that followed, her words, "I cannot, will not, be your wife," were burning into his heart!

Slowly the color receded from his face, his eyes moved uneasily, his lips met and then pressed each other so tightly that his countenance appeared as a statue of hate cut in iron; then springing forward passionately as the tiger leaps upon his prey, he grasped her wrist so tightly that the pain frightened her, and forcing her back, back into the very spot where he had made that last desperate assault in his battle with Lacey, he cried:

"You will not? Then you shall. I understand the cause of your sudden change; I know why you would be unfaithful to your vows; I witnessed the birth of your infidelity the night that brazen Norman was introduced into the arbor. I saw your heart fluttering in sudden passion for a beardless face and a mad zealot's tuneful tongue, and," he continued, his voice now hoarse with increasing rage, "I saw on the night of the storm your

head upon his shoulder, your hand within his; you the chaste, spirituelle Minette; you, whose angel's face had won the confidence of every mother in Touraine, standing thus, without shame, unmindful alike of obligation, honor, dignity, character and station. But for the respect I bear the Count, your father, I should have killed him there. Now, mark me well. The Crusade will end, but the Crusader will never return; and you shall be my wife or I will involve you in a misery and ruin beside which his punishment of death will be a passing dream."

With these words he threw her arm from him, and, choking with passion, rushed madly away.

For a moment Minette stood motionless, stunned by the horror of his words, her heart convulsively sobbing. Then her little hands were clasped and the angels alone knew she was praying for Lacey. Involuntarily she had stepped out of the shadow of the great tree and a final ray of the disappearing sunlight rested on her beautiful face. Just beside her were the roses. The gentle evening breeze bends them invitingly toward her. Sweet, comforting thought! I will pluck one for him, and stooping, ah! she has touched a thorn, and a drop of blood trickles down her finger.

CHAPTER V

BARRI LE BON

DURING the evening that followed the scene described between Minette and Guibert, the latter and Count Luis, his father, held a long conversation in their apartment. That Minette was its subject there can be no doubt, but exactly what transpired can only be conjectured. Evidently they were not in full accord, for at intervals the Count's voice could be heard in tones of strong dissent. In his younger days Count Luis had been ruled by his love of military glory, and, their estates adjoining, he and Renney had been constant companions in arms. Whatever warlike undertaking interested the one had been always assisted by the other. Each had been second to the other in individual duels, and each had aided the other in petty conflicts with neighboring feudal chiefs. The birth of Minette was an occasion of joy to them both, and at the celebration of the little one's christening they pledged to each other the perpetuation of their friendship in the union of their children. During the years that had followed, declining vigor had arrested their desire to be leaders in all the intrigues that were continually changing the political conditions of France, and since the death

of Minette's mother they had seen less of each other with each succeeding year. With Count Renney of Touraine, however, the sentiment of friendship had never changed. A careful manager of his large estate, he had, notwithstanding a generous disposition toward his large following of lords and knights, continually added to his wealth, but all the constantly enlarging circle of friends and followers, all his increased riches did not lessen his affection for his old time comrade.

Count Luis had been less fortunate. No small part of his income had been required to maintain Guibert at the court of Philip, and in various ways his property had been dissipated so that all he had left were his lands and title. Parthenay was at best but an insignificant county, and he had, therefore, abundant selfish reason for strongly desiring the wedding to take place at an early day. Old associations were of much less moment to him than the replenishment of his estate, and it was with no little concern, therefore, that he witnessed the situation between Guibert and Minette. Always opposed to the Crusade, it was all the more distasteful to him now that the enthusiasm to which it had given birth had brought into Touraine an influence likely to prove fatal to his expectations. He was too politic, however, to have ever committed the mistake Guibert had made of inviting Minette by the very brutality of his words and manner to give a positive refusal, but he was none the less dangerous an enemy.

As soon as she recovered from the sickening sensation of fright and dread occasioned by the terrible words of Guibert, Minette returned home and went immediately to her own room, and here, sitting by the window, looking out into the gathering twilight, she could see in one direction the arbor where she had first looked

upon the open, manly countenance of Lacey, listened to the music of his eloquent words, and felt her heart pulsating under the magnetic influence of a sublime emotion; and in another, the road along which her eyes had followed him on the morning of his departure. All the events of the weeks past crowded upon her memory, and with it all there was a sense of undefinable fear. What did Guibert mean? Were his words mere random shafts of passion, or did they indicate a carefully considered plan of revenge? Sheltered by her father's love, how could he involve her in misery and ruin? And yet, she shivered a little at the words. In the vast army of the Crusade, how could he do harm to Lacey? And still, among such numbers, what dreadful wrong might not be done, what crime committed, and no one know? She wished Lacey were not going. Was the Crusade right? Did the Saviour ever seek to establish His glory through the pain and suffering of humanity? Without a sword, did He ever conquer by aught but love? And then she remembered the words of Louise: "What is all of Palestine but an empty shell?" Did not even Peter and Paul forsake it and turn their faces westward, even to Rome? Was the Crusade an inspiration from God, or was this tremendous enthusiasm the result of the unreason of aimless wanderers to and from Jerusalem, and the political unrest of France?

She was in a whirlpool of doubt. Had not Peter more than any other man communed with God along the weary road of the pilgrim? Was he not inspired? Traveling from the East to the West, he had preached the Crusade in every city and village, in the cottage of the peasant and along the roadside. Every hermit and monk, every abbot and priest, had taken up the cry, "On to Jerusalem." The Bishop of Tours had endorsed it. Her father

was an enthusiast. The good Pope Urban had counselled it at Clermont with all the power and grandeur of his sublime eloquence. In all France a mighty voice had cried, "God willeth it." Was this not inspiration? And Lacey; could he be wrong? Impossible! The shadows of night had been deepening, and now as she looked out upon the sky a star radiantly beautiful glittered in the great vault of space. She thought of Bethlehem as she exclaimed:

"Omen of light and truth; yes, the Crusade is right; God will protect him."

A comforted feeling swept away for the time the memory of those dreadful words of Guibert, and retiring to her couch, she slept peacefully long before the voices in the apartment of Count Luis had ceased.

Calmed as she had been by the influence of her thoughts, it was not, however, without anxiety that Minette answered the summons to breakfast the following morning. To meet Guibert after the insulting words he had spoken, and to meet him in the presence of her father and Count Luis, was the most unpleasant, the most difficult duty she had ever attempted to perform; and yet, there was no escape. Guibert and his father were both going home, and she could find no excuse for avoiding this meeting that would not have aroused something more than surprise in her father, and led to interrogations she did not yet feel strong enough to answer. It was a part of her duty, hard as it was to endure. The opportunity had come, and come without her seeking to extricate herself from a false position. She had met the issue squarely, and had torn asunder a bond in the making of which she had no part. This meeting would be a confirmation of her act, and would settle the relations that were hereafter to exist between herself and

Guibert. She was not certain, moreover, that the temper of Guibert had not already acquainted her father with what he had passionately called her deceit, and in this uncertain frame of mind she entered the breakfast room outwardly calm, but trembling inwardly.

Guibert arose, and bowed in his usual manner. Count Luis had heretofore been somewhat paternal with her, but he now saluted her with unusual warmth and attention; her father greeted her in his old time affectionate way, just as he had always done when she had been at home. Little things! but in her woman's heart she understood them all. There was a moment's silence, for a feeling of constraint rested upon all except Count Renney. Guibert moved nervously in his chair, and Minette, just as nervous, though with a more calm exterior, wondered how it would end.

It was at this opportune moment that the door opened, and a servant announced the arrival at the chateau of Barri le Bon, a knight of Poitiers, and follower of the Count of Poitou.

"Bring him to us at once," exclaimed Count Renney, "it is early; he cannot yet have been refreshed with his morning meal, and if he has, he shall eat again."

Never was there a more grateful heart than Minette's, and never did handsome knight receive a more winning smile than did Barri le Bon when a moment later he was ushered into the breakfast room.

"I beg your pardon, Messieurs les Comtes de Touraine and Parthenay, and yours, Monsieur Guibert de Barreaux, and yours most of all, fair Mademoiselle Minette, for intruding upon you at this hour, but I have ridden since daybreak from Chateauroux on my way to Orleans with a message to the Duke. I should have breakfasted

at Tours, but Touraine was so invitingly near and its hospitality so well known."

"And glad are we to see you, Sir Knight," replied Count Renney. "Sit ye down at once; we have but one complaint, and that is that we do not see you oftener; tell us what is new in Poitiers."

"Indeed I should be but a bearer of old news. I have not been in Poitiers for a month, but if you would like to hear from the southern counties, I can tell you that all of Southern France is a vast military camp. I was at Foix and Toulouse, and only a week ago I left Clermont."

"At Foix and Toulouse, and Clermont? Clermont! that most favored city, where Urban and Peter gathered together that vast multitude which under the influence of a mighty inspiration exclaimed as one voice, 'God willeth it.' You have come from these cities? Indeed, Sir Knight, I trust your message to his grace is not urgent, for we cannot let you go till you have told us all you have seen and heard. You must at least rest with us the day."

"My message is from the Bishop of Puy, and it is urgent. I cannot stay beyond an hour, but in that time I can tell you much. France does not know the magnificence of the Southern expedition. The great army of Godfrey which started last month was scarcely more than half as large as that of Raymond. Not only Foix and Toulouse, but Carcassonne, Narbonne, Arles, Avignon, and Rhodez, are vast military camps, and all over the southern counties, and the Duchy of Gascony, there is a constant movement of knights and soldiers concentrating at central points and being armed with the best of weapons; and even from over the mountains recruits are being brought.

"All the great cities are busy forging weapons and making uniforms for the knights and clothing for the common soldiers. Not an idle man or woman can be found. Times were never so prosperous; money never so plenty. The whole country is ablaze with enthusiasm. All this is being done with the money of Raymond. It flows all the day like water, and no one knows the extent of his riches. To such as have neither religious fervor nor private ambition to push them forward to the Crusade, he offers a bounty, and many he hires outright; his emissaries do not question the price of what is required for his equipment, but they demand immediate execution of his orders, for the Count is very impatient, and has set next week as the time of his departure. There are those who say he is haughty, that he is arrogant, that he is greedy and avaricious, but there is not one within the influence of his enormous undertaking to assert that he has any private ambition to advance, or that his heart and conscience are not loyal to the holy cause."

The Count of Touraine was delighted. He enjoyed the words of le Bon more than the meal that was being served. An admirer of Raymond for his sterling qualities, the haughtiness and pride with which the Count had been charged gave him little concern; knowing, as he did, that similar accusations have been made against most men whose moral qualities were superior to those of their neighbors; and, himself wealthy, and charitable as he was affluent, he had no quarrel with those richer than himself. If a thought of envy entered the heart of the grand old noble it was because he, too, was not like Raymond going to the Crusade.

And, always interested in anything relating to the glorious movement, Minette had reasons of her own, as

can well be understood, for being entertained by the words of the handsome young knight. To Count Luis and Guibert, however, the appearance of le Bon, at that particular time, and the drift he had given to the conversation were extremely distasteful. Guibert had intended during that interview to shape his words so Minette should feel a cloud resting upon her bravely asserted title to freedom; and the Count was to have adroitly restored the old relations by a few cunningly devised expressions of cheerful acquiescence in delaying for a year the happiness and honor she was about to bring to his family, believing she would not dare reiterate her words to Guibert or enter a protest in the presence of her father, and thus by her own silence she would be surprised into a tacit renewal of her obligations to which her conscience would now be a party.

Hoping now to direct attention from le Bon, and hasten his departure, for his own carriage had been ordered, he exclaimed:

"And whatever may be his present seeming prodigality and his apparent humility in throwing his fortunes into the Crusade, all these charges against Raymond are true. You and I, Count, well remember the affair in Castras in which our success was defeated by his greed, and you remember how, when we were all young together, his haughty pride and avaricious spirit drew him away from all our merry entertainments where we pledged to each other our lives and fortunes, and where our money flowed as freely as the wine we drank."

"Always begging your honor's pardon if I seem to differ with you," replied le Bon; "but though not possessing the inestimable value of your years of wisdom and experience, I have been much at court, and have observed that often the desire to accumulate and save

what we call wealth, which, in itself, outside of our reasonable needs, is of little value, for perhaps some great object is often mistaken for greed, and high moral qualities that elevate one's character beyond festivities, where reason and restraint too often yield to the influence of the wine cask, are many times, and as it seems to me unjustly, regarded as haughtiness and pride. I know not that Raymond may not have been rightfully charged with all these defects of character we have named, but even so, would it not appear that God uses those qualities in man least noble to aid in the accomplishment of a glorious purpose?"

Minette's eyes sparkled with pleasure as she listened to these sentiments; nor were they alone the cause. Back of the words of Count Luis she divined a motive for terminating the interview, and hastening the knight's departure. She felt that this motive, whatever it might be, was some design against herself, and she was grateful to the young man that he had not understood.

The words of le Bon might have been construed as offensive had not the manner of their utterance divested them of any thought of personality.

"Well answered," heartily exclaimed the Count of Touraine. "Your words do you honor; but tell us of Clermont; what saw you in that noble city?"

"There I witnessed a sight grander than all; the most impressive scene my eyes have ever looked upon. I shall never see another like it. Twenty young men were admitted to knighthood, for the purpose of entering the Crusade in that order. They were dubbed by Adhemar himself, whom the holy father has appointed his legate, the spiritual head of the expedition. I wish I could paint the picture as I beheld it, that the inspiration shining upon the faces of those who gazed upon the sublime

ceremonies, as well as the beautiful scene itself, might be before your eyes.

"The initial ceremony was the mystery of purification; water is its symbol. Each aspirant was first bathed in the fountain whose waters were made pure by holy rites. Each was then presented with a white tunic, and one by one they came out in presence of the multitude clothed in the same; their souls free from the color of every sin, white as the raiment that covered their bodies. Over the white there was next wrapped around them a robe of red, a reminder that in the defense of the Christian faith, in the support of truth and love, in protecting the weak and guarding their own integrity and honor, they must shed blood when duty demanded. After this they were invested with a close-fitting black sagum, emblematical of death, which is common to all.

"These were but preliminary ceremonies. The multitude now dispersed and spent the day in games and festivities, while the young candidates for knightly honors retired by themselves and abstained from all food for twenty-four hours, during which time they were frequently visited by priests, who exhorted them toward keeping their souls constantly exalted and to ever cherish noble aims; and when the darkness came they were conducted into the church, where they spent the entire night in prayer. The midnight hour was made solemnly impressive by the sweet chanting of sacred music from a hundred angelic voices. Can you imagine anything more impressively beautiful? Never shall I forget that hour when I myself was an aspirant. My soul seemed to be floating in heavenly realms; the celestial harmony to come from angel voices, and a delicious dreamy ecstasy seemed to be bearing my soul through luminous waves divinely soft. I felt all around an influence, an

intelligence, a life invisible. Then, as if in answer to a great desire that arose in my heart to behold the mystery and glory of heavenly life, I saw, look where I would, all through the waves of light that filled celestial space, written in letters of gold, the word LOVE, and felt that it was being printed on my soul. Pardon my digression. I was for the moment lost in the delightful memory of my own sublime impression on entering the grand order. When morning came each one made confession of his sins, and after the communion a mass of the Holy Spirit was celebrated, and the Bishop of Puy instructed them in their new duties in the presence of the people who had again assembled."

"'To you,' he exclaimed, 'who are about to take upon yourselves the ever binding obligations of knighthood, a new and higher life is opening. The past is no longer yours; neither does the present, nor will your future life belong to you alone. Henceforth you will be inspired to noble ambition, to acts that are just, and to thoughts that will ever lead you to honor and truth. The degree of knighthood will invest you with grave responsibilities, but fidelity to those responsibilities will bring you equally great honor. The motive that has led your aspirations toward this supreme order will make your career all the more glorious, and when the object of the Crusade is accomplished, your thoughts will be directed toward Christian love, honor, charity, justice; for you will ever be a soldier of God. In discharging your duties as a knight, you will faithfully serve your country and its sovereign king. Whenever you are present in the quarrels of others, you will support the weak against the strong, especially the widow, orphan, or maiden, provided it be not against your own honor or your lawful prince. You will never wrongfully take that

which belongs to another or injure one in battle without just cause. You will fight only through patriotism, obeying the orders of your generals and captains; through fidelity to religion; for your honor or that of a brother knight; for glory and virtue, and for the common weal; never for greed or for pay without the cause be just. You will honor other knights, aiding them whenever called upon, and having made a vow you will never put off your armor, save for a night's rest, until the same shall have been fulfilled. It will be your duty to compel the violent to return to law and order, and you will never permit a wrong to be done in your presence. You will protect dame or damsel at their request, and guard them with your life. If challenged to equal combat you will never refuse unless incapacitated by wounds or sickness, and having undertaken any just enterprise you will never withdraw until the same shall have been accomplished. You will always remember that your word can never be violated, and whenever you return from any expedition you will render a true account of all your adventures at the court of your sovereign. And, lastly, let it be ever in your thoughts that upon your fidelity to the Christian religion, and to the church through which its mysteries are manifested, will depend all your honor in this life and all your glory in the world to come.'

"The young candidates then all knelt and swore to be loyal and true, and the knights present drew near and reclothed them in all their new attire, putting on the spurs, the coat of mail, cuirass, armlets and gauntlets, and lastly the sword. Then each of the twenty passed before the Bishop, who arose and striking him three blows across the shoulder with the flat of his sword, exclaimed, 'In the name of God, St. Michael and St. George, I dub thee knight; be valiant, bold and loyal.'

"Happy, indeed, were they all, and brave they looked as their horses, helmets and lances were brought. Leaping upon their steeds, they made their swords flash and rode against each other in mimic battle with their lances, exhibiting their horsemanship and skill with weapons, to the delight of the multitude, until the sun went down upon the scene. It seemed to me that every inhabitant for miles around must have been there."

Here le Bon paused, and a slight color of embarrassment passed over his manly face, when he continued:

"All this was of such interest to me, since it carried me back to the time as though it were but yesterday, when alone, I passed through the same ceremonies and entered into the same obligations, and I fear I have appeared unmindful of the courtesy due the hospitality of the Count of Touraine and the presence of Parthenay, as well as that respectful attention which should ever be characteristic of a true knight, toward Monsieur Guibert and to you, Mademoiselle Minette, in so trespassing upon your good nature."

The Count of Parthenay and Guibert answered this polite apology with a show of courtesy that was sincere in neither, for there was nothing they so much desired as to be rid of his presence. Minette expressed her grateful appreciation as only a woman can, with her eyes alone. Then, as by common impulse, all arose, the Count of Touraine stepping forward, grasped the young knight's hand.

"Do not apologize," he exclaimed. "It is we who are your debtors. You have brought back to me the scenes of my own youth, and not for that alone, but we have to thank you for the information you have given us of how the great movement is going on in the south. We thank you, too, for all you have said of Raymond, for we love

to believe that amid all the intrigue, the corruption, the selfishness we see all around us in the politics of France, there are still men with honest motives. As your message to the Duke is urgent, we will not detain you, but may we not hope you will remain some days with us on your return to Poitiers?"

"It will certainly be an additional pleasure to receive your kind greeting on my return, though I fear I may not be able to remain beyond a few hours, as I shall have little more than time to deliver the Duke's reply at Poitiers and reach Toulouse before the army starts."

"Before the army starts? Do you mean that you are going with Raymond? I thought the Count of Poitou looked coldly on the Crusade."

"So he does; at least, I fear so; but he has granted me and a few other knights leave of absence to do as our conscience dictates in the matter, and we go with Raymond."

"This is indeed noble; every word you utter increases the pleasure your visit brings us. Go, then, with your message, and fail not to spend as many hours with us as you can on your return."

The knight's horse was now brought, and mounting, he bowed gracefully to each one of the company, then taking the road to Tours, was soon out of sight.

As Count Renney watched his retreating figure, he appeared for the moment lost in thought. Then he exclaimed:

"I have known him from a boy! Brave, yet kind; politic, but honest; courteous, but sincere; a poetic soul, a loyal heart; wherever he goes France will be honored. But we are forgetting," he continued, as the carriage of Count Luis and the horse of Guibert were now brought

to the door, "the flight of time; and must you indeed go today? We have scarcely seen you."

"Our departure," replied Count Luis, "from Parthenay was made so abruptly and for the sole purpose we considered yesterday, the accomplishment of which it mutually fits our better judgment should be postponed a year, that we can hardly remain longer. Moreover, Guibert has decided he will go to the Crusade, believing from our conversation, which I related to him, it will win him none the less of your esteem, and he will have none too much time to prepare."

The Count of Touraine was amazed. Knowing that Guibert had no sentiment in common with the Crusaders, he had never attempted to influence his thought or action; nor had it ever occurred to him to think any the less of his judgment or courage for that reason. Always sincere himself, he found no fault with others who were consistent with their convictions, however much they differed with his own. In his first sensation of surprise there was something of pride and pleasure. Then came the emptiness of uncertainty. To what was this sudden determination due? Was it the irritation of temporary disappointment, the wavering of an uncertain mind, or was there some higher purpose? If the resolution or even its suggestion had come sooner; and pride and pleasure died away in shadowy doubt. Had he glanced at Minette his surprise would have increased a hundred fold.

A moment before, as she listened breathlessly to the eloquent words of le Bon, her fancy pictured them as coming from the spirit of Lacey. They were such as he would have uttered. Again her eyes were softly radiant; again the warm color spread its beauty over her face; again that smile, divinely sweet, rested on her lips. Then

came the words of Count Luis, "Guibert has decided he will go to the Crusade." The rose tint fled from her face, the happy smile from her lips. Her eyes, no longer radiant, were irresistibly drawn staring to those of Guibert, in which she read, "This is the beginning of my revenge." She saw the look of rage, felt the thought of revenge that was reflected from his heart, and in that intense silent moment's glance heard again the words, "Misery! Ruin! Death!"

What a picture, as the four thus stood in front of the chateau! Minette leaning for support against the old chestnut, unable to withdraw her frightened gaze from Guibert's hateful stare, and Count Luis cunningly watching the effect of his words upon the face of his old friend.

"Pardon my surprise," now exclaimed the Count of Touraine; then turning to Guibert, "I did not know your thoughts were in that direction. We shall pray for your safe return, and I wish you every honor that a brave man may enjoy. You will fight, not alone to restore Jerusalem, but to sustain the dignity of that religion whose influence must ever attend the progress of true civilization. In future years the world will acknowledge the debt of gratitude it owes to the courage of the sons of France." Then taking his hand, he continued, "be not rash, but since you go, do your duty with honor to God, to France, and to yourself." And the eye that had frightened Minette with its bold, threatening glare quailed before the dignity of the noble old man.

The two Counts now saluted each other in the old time friendly manner; the portly form of Luis was assisted into his carriage, Guibert, feeling a little less the master than he had the moment before, mounted his horse, and

carriage and horseman were soon disappearing along the road to Parthenay.

Still weak from the dreadful thought Guibert had flashed into her heart, Minette took her father's arm, and together father and daughter walked inside, into the Count's library. Quietly she sat on the arm of the chair in which he rested, her arm lovingly around his neck rested on his opposite shoulder. For a few moments neither spoke; then Minette asked softly:

"Father, do you like Count Luis?"

Count Renney was startled; then he replied:

"Why, surely, child, he is my old friend. What put such a thought into your head?"

She did not reply, but gently pushed back one of the gray locks that had fallen over his forehead. In a little while he said:

"I think, Minette, after our lunch, I should enjoy a ride in the park, if it would please you to go with me."

Never had Minette slept more peacefully than she did that night. She had expected embarrassment, distress, pain. Happily, the unexpected visit of le Bon had made the embarrassment less than she thought, and she had bravely endured the distress and pain, all of which had been removed in the feeling of protection that came over her in that afternoon drive with her father. Sitting by his side as the carriage slowly passed beneath the shadows of the great trees, how she loved to hear him talk of the Crusade! How proud she felt of Lacey and of his love! How she longed to tell him of it all! And she was sorry when it was over and they returned to the chateau.

The following morning she rose early. Knowing le Bon would stop the next day on his return to Poitiers, and from there to join the company of knights at Toulouse, she had determined to ask him to carry a letter to

Louise, even though it might be many weeks before it could be delivered. She would at least be happy in the thought that the words she had written were each day nearer her friend, and after the morning meal she commenced a task, the pleasure of which she had never before so fully experienced.

"My Dear Louise:

"I received your note from Nantes, and am hoping the letter you were to write when you arrived at Taranto will somehow find its way to me soon. I am sitting in the room where we together looked out upon that strangely red sunset the last evening you were here, and feel as I write that we are again visiting. In imagination I fancy you are here now, as you were then. Sad, indeed, must be the separation of the many who have never learned as did we in the convent at Tours to seal up our thoughts and transmit them over miles of forest and plain, across mountains and rivers, bringing to each other a heart's greeting fresh as though the words were but spoken. The messenger who bears this to you is a Crusader, and that may not recommend him to you, but engage him in conversation and you will discover he is one of the noblest knights of France. No two were ever more alike than he and your cousin Lacey. Next week he will leave with the vast army of Raymond, and then this message of my love for you will be on its way. But how silent will be all of France! Even now, though the birds still sing, there is less music in their notes; the fields are less golden, and the leaves are dropping from the trees, lying upon the ground, dry and withered. In the stillness I think of your words, "Does not the Saviour dwell with us here in France; is He not even in our hearts?" and they give me comfort. I am hoping, dear Louise, the Crusade may be soon over, and that the sacrifice we are making in sending such enormous armies may make the suffering all the less and the pain the sooner ended. Before this letter reaches you, there will be a still greater distance between us, and yet somehow

I feel that we shall meet sooner than we know. Perhaps it is out of the very sorrow of our separation this feeling is born. I fear I am writing sadly, but the past two days have brought me an experience of fright and pain I never knew before. Guibert knows of my love for Lacey, and he and Count Luis asked that the ceremony of our marriage take place at once. I pleaded with my father my vow not to marry till the Crusade was over, and his love intervened. He does not know, and for that I feel a little guilty. Why Guibert did not tell him I feel sure is due to the deeper craftiness of Count Luis, who hopes by an apparent acquiescence in the delay to keep the net of this horrible engagement about me. Afterward, alone in the park, I told Guibert I would never be his wife and in rage he threatened misery and ruin to me and death to Lacey. I cannot tell you all his words; they were too dreadful, and just as they were leaving yesterday his father announced Guibert's sudden resolution of going to the Crusade. Guibert's eyes told me what that resolution meant. I do not fear for Lacey in open quarrel; but, oh! Louise, if he should never know until the blow was struck! If anything happened to him, surely that would be misery and ruin for me. I felt happier in the afternoon driving with my father in the park, and still happier now that I have told you, for you are near him and your discernment may detect and warn him of a danger that would escape the notice of a man. You were always wise, wiser than I, and as at Tours I always came to you with my little trials, all imaginary, I now come with a trouble that is real. Looking over my letter, nearly all about my own troubles, it seems hardly worthy, as I wished to make it a warm welcome, and I should fear it would be uninteresting were you not Louise and I MINETTE."

For a moment she sat silently thinking; then rising she went into her own room, and returned with two violets neatly pressed, still retaining their delicate perfume; and again she wrote:

"Monsieur Lacey de Hauteville.

"Dear Lacey—You asked me once to say it. I thought it would be harder to write, but

How easily the hand
Is guided by the heart's command,

and now that I have them written they do look very pretty. I do not forget any of your words, and am trying to think as you wished, and have been very brave. Ask Louise to read you her letter and you will know. And, Lacey, in all the perils by which you will be surrounded do not be rash. Brave I know you will be, but seek not unnecessary danger. And beware, always beware of Guibert. Learn where he goes and watch his every movement, for his threat was not an idle one. Guard yourself and you protect me. Dear heart, I was sitting in the park last week, and looking down I saw two violets growing on one stem; the first I ever saw other than singly. Was it not an omen of good for us that I should see it? I separated the flowers; how pretty they are! and one is here for Lacey, the other stays with me, and so you have them both, for am I not your

MINETTE."

Neatly folding both letters together and affixing her father's seal and her own smaller one underneath, she took the precious little package to her room and placed it under her pillow.

It was nearly noon the next day before le Bon dismounted in front of the chateau, and kindly patted his dusty horse as he was being led away to the stables. The Count greeted him even more warmly than before. Now that he was a knight of the Crusade, now that he was one of that glorious army that two thousand miles away would assail the enemies of God and France, there was a greater interest attached to his person than there could have been to plain Barri le Bon, loyal soldier and chivalrous knight though he was. And there was another

reason, too, at which the Count himself felt not a little puzzled, and that was that there was lacking a certain sensation of restraint experienced in the presence of Count Luis. In their younger days they had never differed. Were they now drifting apart?

The evening was a pleasant one, and particularly so to Minette, who listened to the recital of the story of Raymond's army, the incidents of the twenty knights at Clermont, the adventures of le Bon on the road to Orleans; all repeated over and over again with an interest ever new, and as the evening shadows gathered the voice of the knight brought back to her heart the memory of the twilight when Lacey had told her in such beautiful words of his love. Long after she had retired to her room she sat looking out upon the glory of the sky radiant with stars and thought they were shining over him also.

In the morning she rose early. Her father had not yet appeared. Le Bon was just returning from the stables, for a careful knight loves his horse, and approaching him, she exclaimed: "Monsieur le Bon, may I ask of your good nature to undertake for me a mission as you proceed on your long journey?"

"Anything you desire, Mademoiselle Minette," he replied, "is already accomplished."

"I think you remember my friend Louise?"

"I saw her once at Tours and again on the evening of the reception given on your return from school. She is one not to be forgotten."

"True! nor does she forget those whose thoughts are noble," and taking the little packet from the folds of her dress, she continued: "You may be surprised to know she is going to the Crusade. She is even now with Bohemond, who is her uncle. I am told the armies will

all meet at Constantinople; will it trouble you to find her and deliver this letter?"

"To be entrusted with a commission from you is an honor and all the more so that it carries with it the pleasure of meeting your friend. Be assured, I will guard it with my life and seek the first opportunity of delivering it into her own hands," and taking the letter he placed it in his tunic just as the servant entered announcing the morning meal, and that the Count was already waiting in the breakfast room.

Long after the knight had departed Minette sat in the arbor. A feeling of returning confidence stole over her. Her messages of love and warning were already being borne by loyal hands to Louise and to Lacey. So far she had bravely sustained her part in the struggle with Guibert, and if she had for a moment recoiled before his brutality she had not shrank from any of the issues he had forced upon her. With supreme courage she had extricated herself from a false position, and her quiet woman's tact, aided by a fortunate circumstance, had defeated his plan to compel her to prematurely expose her love for Lacey before her father at a moment most embarrassing to his sense of honor, or to submit without protest to conditions that would have again compromised her sensitive mind.

True, the struggle had only begun, but in that beginning the violence of Guibert and the cunning of his father had been overmatched, and, as sitting in that favorite spot which was associated with such pleasing influences, she thought of Louise, whose loyal friendship, whose wisdom and sympathy would all be enlisted in her support; of Lacey, for whom she had braved it all and would brave a thousand times as much, of Lacey, strong in the nobility of youth; of le Bon,

gallant knight and faithful friend, whose courage and wisdom a word would bring to her aid; of her father, whose love was a shield behind which she felt protected, a wall of defence impenetrable to the shafts of Guibert's revenge seemed already building up around her.

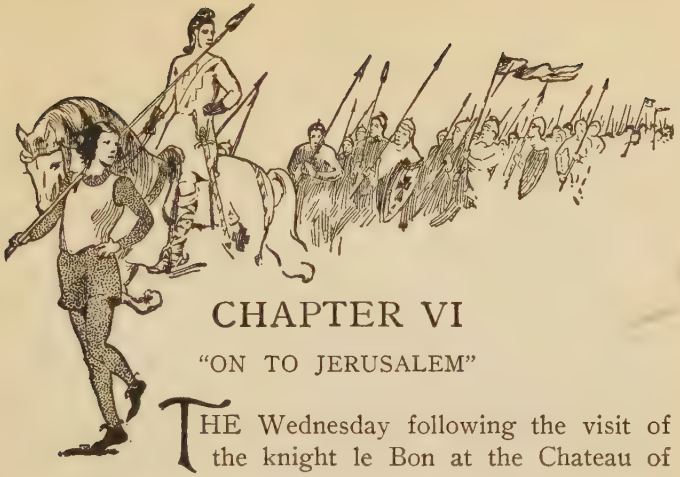
In these thoughts were confidence, rest, peace. In the solitude of that beautiful spot a dreamy sensation stole over her; then the sunlight shining beyond grew dimmer, all around her the growing haziness obscured her vision; she could no longer see the road over which Lacey had traveled the morning of his departure. Imperceptibly the obscurity deepened into a cloud that overspread the scene around her, and in that thickening gloom every sense seemed to have departed. She could not see the chateau, nor the trees around her, nor yet the leaves that touched her face; nor could she feel the soft air blowing gently over her, nor smell the fragrance of the flowers within her reach, nor hear the music of the birds that played amid the branches all about her, nor cry out as in her fright she would have done. And then out of that cloud appeared a form, a shape hateful, loathsome to look upon; its features human, yet ever changing, every member of its abhorrent body, head, trunk and limbs in constant motion. Fixing upon her its gaze, with a malignant laugh, the figure exclaimed:

"Of what avail is strength, friendship, loyalty, faith and love? All these yield to my touch. My presence is unknown, unsuspected, until I seize those I would destroy. I break down the tissues, poison the vital fluid, strike the fatal blow and bring ruin, death."

But even as he spoke the hateful figure vanished and in its place was an angel form, divinely beautiful, and she heard a voice soft as the whisper of the leaves, murmur:

"Stronger than the Demon of Hate is the Spirit of Love."

A sweet perfume floated over her, as slowly the angel form faded away, and the merry sunlight again played about the arbor.



CHAPTER VI

"ON TO JERUSALEM"

THE Wednesday following the visit of the knight le Bon at the Chateau of Touraine was the day set for the departure of Raymond's army. Every day during the previous week messengers had been constantly passing between Toulouse and the cities and villages adjacent where the various divisions of the army congregated, and at early dawn on the morning of the 15th of September, 1096, the army began to march out of Toulouse.

Never was there an event more full of enthusiasm; never was there a scene more imposing, more inspiring, as amid the blowing of horns and pipes, the neighing of steeds, the shouts of the commanders and the cheers of the people who lined the streets and roads for miles out of the city, the head of the army, Raymond leading, marched out of the eastern gate and crossing the river took the road to Carcassonne. Twenty thousand mounted knights followed Raymond; one entire company, riding white horses, and destined to become an important factor in the final tragedy, and behind these a constantly moving mass of foot soldiers were passing through the streets and gate for hours afterward—long after the crowds had cheered themselves hoarse. All

business was suspended, and all day long the bells in all the churches rang as they never had rung before. In that day of general joy there was amnesty, too, and peace, and neighbors who had not spoken for years looked into each other's eyes and with hands grasped forgot their quarrels.

In the previous months of preparation, the continual excitement, the animation of the crowds daily receiving the red cross, the tournaments of the knights, and the games of the foot soldiers, the continued masses in the churches and the constant prayers of the priests, there had been no time, nor, indeed, was there any desire for reflection. It was a period of action. It was an impulse of France to wrest Jerusalem from the infidel, an impulse born of excitement, outside of reason, outside of Christianity, and yet Christianity suffered the burden of its paternity, and suffers it to-day.

Scarcely one of the good people of Toulouse but had been at Clermont, heard the story of Peter and listened to the burning words of Urban, and all had caught an infection, that, through the influence of the unwavering devotion of Raymond, had been absorbed by their hearts up to the very hour they had witnessed the grand military pageant in the departure of his magnificent army.

"God willeth it! Restore to Christians the capital city of our Lord! Beat down the sword of the Turk who guards the entrance to the Holy Sepulchre!" These were the words by which the flame was constantly fanned.

Save the few who had made the pilgrimage, scarcely one in all that cheering, tumultuous crowd knew aught of Jerusalem, aught of the holy land; nor did they know more of the weary miles and dangers that intervened, and now that the army was really gone, and

with it their loved ones, now that the night had come and the gate through which all had passed was closed, now that friend missed his companion, and father, husband and brother came not to the evening meal, there was a stillness. Already joy was burdened with the image of a doubt, and then a passing thought:

"When will the bells ring again and the horns blow?"

'Twas but a breath of the dread storm that in the years that followed swept from the East over France, leaving in every city and village and in the peasants' huts, that dotted the valleys and nestled among the hills and in the forests, a legacy of sorrow and mourning and pain, the sad details of which history tells but the hundredth part, leaving the rest to him alone who can read the chapters of the human heart.

And while the gloom of night brought this stillness over Toulouse the army was resting twenty miles away. Soon after leaving the river they commenced to ascend the plain that led to the hills around Carcassonne. It was very dusty, for there had been no rain for two weeks, and now sitting down to a soldier's meal, many footsore, all weary, they began already to ask, "How far is it to Jerusalem?"

In the afternoon of the third day they entered Carcassonne and were greeted by the cheers of the people and of the detachment that was waiting there to join them, and the following morning as all marched forward the same scene of wild joy that had occurred at Toulouse was re-enacted. All the way eastward through France, at Montpelier and Nimes, and all the smaller villages, as well as among the peasants, enthusiastic crowds wished them God-speed. At the Rhone the people of Orange lined the river bank and at Valence and Grenoble additional bands of Crusaders joined them.

Just one month from the day they left Toulouse they camped for the night at the foot of Mt. Blanc, and looking upward at that lofty peak, and then at the rugged pass before them, the foot soldiers, tired, soiled, weary, again looked at one another and asked, "How far is it to Jerusalem?"

To Minette it had been a month of anxiety. Slowly the days had passed since Lacey's departure, and slower still after her last brief visit with Louise, who for years had been her almost constant companion. A few short hours the visit of le Bon had been like a gleam of sunshine through a rift in the clouds, and then with the quiet that settled down over France after the departure of the army the old weariness of waiting returned.

Painful as is the separation of two hearts that love, it is doubly so to the one who waits. To him whose thoughts are occupied with pressing duties, daily entering upon new scenes, encountering vicissitudes, perhaps dangers, the days come and go, and be his heart ever so loyal, love as sincerely and fondly as he may, the keen edge of his grief is dulled by the very necessity which enforces upon him constant action. Little shafts of pain he may not escape, nor moments of sorrow. He will mourn as memory strikes sharply upon the chords of his heart, but out of the pain, the sorrow and the mourning he will find comfort in the thought that the rapidly flying hours are all the time carrying him forward to a reunion in which all the sadness of separation will be forgotten.

But to her who waits, how wearily pass the hours and the days. How the dread and the fear of something, she knows not what, holds her heart in its remorseless grip. How the pain gnaws and the gloom deepens as even hope conceals itself behind a cloud. Turn as

she will to the future, how can she escape the present? Each day exaggerates the dread and the fear and the mourning of yesterday; and so she waits and endures and lives only in the glimpses of hope her love catches here and there.

It was late in the afternoon of the very day the army of Raymond rested at Mont Blanc that Minette returned from a walk in the park. Her thoughts had been busy. Nearly two months had passed since Louise had gone, and save the one brief note from Nantes, there had come no word from her or Lacey. She was uneasy, too, about Guibert; all the more so that since his departure nothing had come from Parthenay. Uncertain as to his movements, ignorant as to whether he had gone with Raymond, or had joined the small force of Count Hugh, who, sailing from the coast of Italy, had chosen the easier road offered by the Mediterranean; knowing his intent, the motive that led him into the Crusade, she was depressed with an anxiety magnified by the uncertainty of his plans, if he had as yet really formed any, and of the means he was adopting for their execution. Full of solicitude and foreboding as she approached the chateau, she did not notice her father at the entrance until she stood in front of him and saw his kind smile as he placed a little packet in her eager hands.

"My dear child," he exclaimed, "I have had a delightful visit from the Bishop, who, on his way to Columbiers, was good enough to bring this letter for you. It came up on the boat yesterday from Nantes, no doubt from your old friend. I was sorry you were not here. There was just time to reach Columbiers tonight, but he will stop and talk with us on his return tomorrow. Go now and read your letter, and tell me at our evening meal

whatever of interest it contains. As I remember, her heart was not like yours, turned toward the Crusade, but she may speak of Bohemond and his army, and I would gladly hear of them."

And the good old man never knew what a fountain in her heart had been reached as her two arms were clasped around his neck and her lips were pressed again and again to his own.

"Poor child," was his thought, as he watched her retreating figure; "it's a great change from the convent to this quiet spot, and she misses more than all the companionship of her friend. Life should be full of joy, at least to the young and good. I must do something to bring new thoughts and scenes before her."

And Minette! ah! new thoughts had already come. The gloomy emotions, the anxiety, the fear, the foreboding; all had vanished. Clasping the little packet tightly in her hands, a feeling of happiness entered her heart as she sped to her room. Then, sitting by the window, she held it a moment in her hands, and felt an influence of peace. It was as though she had escaped a danger and had reached a point of safety. It seemed to bring protection. Holding it close to her heart, she thought of the loving hands that had sealed it. Perhaps Lacey had touched it; and then she wondered if it spoke of him, or if indeed his own hand may have added one more happiness to it. How should she break the seal? how gather to her heart all her happiness? A moment she placed it to her lips; then separating the folds she found two enclosures, one addressed in the well-known delicate lines of Louise, and the other with less even, coarser letters, the effort of knight and soldier, and she knew it was Lacey who had traced out the words; nor was it any the less welcome to her grateful heart that she

understood as she looked at the broad lines that to have fought a battle would have been to his loyal spirit a less difficult undertaking. Holding this in her hand, she would feel the clasp of Lacey while she read the letter of Louise, reserving to the very last the greater happiness as she looked upon the words of his written love.

It was dated from Taranto, and had been nearly a month on the road, but to Minette it seemed like the thoughts of the moment coming to her in spoken words:

"My Dear Sister:—

"For have we not one heart, and therefore sisters? I have been here almost a week, but there has been no ship leaving for Western France. In two more days the vessel on which I came returns to Nantes, and the captain has promised my letter shall be sent from there to Tours, so I hope it may reach you quickly.

"When I think, dear Minette, of our happy years at Tours, and then of the new life I am leading, and the still stranger scenes I shall soon enter, my soul shrinks from its environments, and there comes to me sometimes almost a hope that I shall wake from an ugly dream and find that we are not parted. Looking back over the days that have passed, I can only marvel that they were gone so quickly, and yet that at this distance it seems a year since last we talked together at beautiful Touraine, when in one little sentence your gentle heart told its love and its pain.

"All the way down the river I thought of when we made the same voyage with the Count, your father, a year ago, and how he showed us all of interest along its banks. I remembered them all as I passed again this time alone. The vessel at Nantes was not large, but a very comfortable room off the cabin had been prepared for me. We stopped at all the cities along the coast and some were very beautiful, as seen from the water; but how I wanted you with me to enjoy the grand scene as we passed through the Straits—the massive, towering, rocky wall of Gibraltar on the one side, and

opposite Tangiers and Ceuta. I could in imagination see the army of Musa wistfully gazing across the narrow waters, while the four vessels bore five hundred Moors under Tarik and the traitor Julian, to first plant the crescent in Spain, nearly four centuries ago, and I thought how you, devoted as you are to the Crusade, would have marveled at the romance of history, and truly it does seem that out of the passions and greed of men and nations in the days and years that are passing an Omnipresent Hand writes the record of centuries and decades of centuries as determined by His wisdom. Stopping for a day at Cartagena, where occurred the culminating tragedy of the second Punic War, we had a fine view of the gold and silver mines which gave to New Carthage her riches and of the old town founded by Hasdrubal himself. Every day there was some new scene that told of the glory of heroes now entombed for centuries. At Naples Lacey was waiting for me, and together we soon left the narrow streets behind us, and, winding around the northern edge of Vesuvius, passed rapidly on toward Taranto, and between your own lovely self, the Crusade and the strange scenery through which we were passing, we found plenty to talk about.

"It was evening of the second day before we reached my uncle's castle, and for an hour before we had been passing among the Crusaders' camps which dotted the roadside. I did not see my uncle till the following morning, for I was tired with the long ride, and going immediately to my mother, she took me to my apartment, ordered our evening meal, and together we ate and talked of my life and studies at the convent, and, most of all, the Crusade, for, as I told you, she is an enthusiast. I slept little that long night. Everything seemed so strange to me; all the scenes through which I had passed since I left you were continually moving before me. Behind was a picture, much of it beautiful; but it ended in the drapery of my room; beyond, all seemed a blank.

"Though I rose early the following morning, my

mother was already waiting for me. 'We shall have but a few minutes,' she said, kissing me affectionately, 'to look at the park, for your Uncle Bohemond is very busy with the cares of equipping his army. He rises early and will expect to see you at the morning meal.'

"Except at Touraine, surely there was nothing ever so beautiful as the park and grounds outside. The old Norman castle standing in the center added to the picturesque scene; and there were the most fragrant flowers, plants I had never seen before, and trees so tall they looked like solemn sentinels in their stately majesty. Breathing the soft air laden with most delightful perfumes, I felt a little of the old color coming to my cheeks, and something of the old joy in my heart that was there before this dreadful Crusade brought its burden of foreboding and dread.

"The exalted station of Bohemond and his being a commander of one of the great armies of the Crusade, had always inspired me with something like a feeling of awe, and I was almost afraid to meet him, but he rose, for he was already seated at the table, and came forward to meet me with such evident kindness that I was quite at ease even in the presence of the nobles who were his guests. I had always pictured him out in my mind as a man devoted to his own ambition. Perhaps it was because I had heard his father spoken of as one who regarded every one his enemy whose property or dominions he coveted. His manner is grave, and he is so tall that a glance impresses one with the thought that he was born to be a commander of men. The morning repast was made an entertainment by his most agreeable conversation, but what surprised me most of all was that during the entire meal the Crusade was not mentioned.

"In the afternoon there was a parade of the entire army, and I never saw anything so grand. Bohemond rode at the head, clad in his armor and with lance in hand, he looked invincible, and none the less so that Tancred rode at his side. Tancred is his lieutenant, and though not so tall, his appearance is fully as strik-

ing. He, too, is a de Hauteville, and is said to be the most skillful as well as the most chivalrous knight in Taranto. The Crusade is his passion, but I suspect it is because an occasion is thereby offered for personal glory in arms more satisfying to his conscience than his combats with Christian knights, for my mother tells me his victories have given him as much anxiety as glory, that he feared they were contrary to the precepts of the church. I think he is the most handsome man I ever saw, and so courteous that one would never suppose he could find a quarrel serious enough for bloodshed. Ever since I came I have been asking myself if I like him. I do, and I do not. I am interested and in a manner fascinated by him. But I quite forgot for the moment both my Uncle Bohemond and Tancred, when Lacey rode by at the head of his company of knights. Not so tall as either of them, the martial appearance of Lacey seemed to me more striking. He looked so young and yet so serious. I even fancied his countenance was sad, as if he pictured to himself how soon his grand army of knights would rush to bloody carnage. An hour I sat and watched this splendid-looking army, and wondered whence so many noble warriors could be congregated, and still it seemed there was no end. Long after I sought my bed that night I lay and marveled what could be the power that, rising in a single soul, had formed three such armies as the one I saw, that, like a vast avalanche, loosened from the Alpine crests, were about to fall on Palestine. The following morning Tancred took me to the watch tower of the castle, where I saw, in the harbor and far out in the blue waters of the sea, a fleet of ships whose numbers I could not count, that was to bear this vast army forward. 'It will be a month,' he said, 'before they can be fully ready, but even then we shall reach Constantinople nearly as soon as either Raymond or Godfrey.' And as he spoke the words, 'it will be a month,' he seemed impatient at the delay, while to me it was another month of sunny life; a month! and then what? How I wish I could feel as others do about this Crusade!

How I wish I could be free from this foreboding; and above all, from your association in it with me, an association which seems so impossible that I try to think 'tis but a morbid fancy of my own imagining, built on our old companionship. Will this prove true or is there an influence, an intelligence, we do not understand, that throws over our souls shadows of real events that are to come? Forgive my gloomy thoughts, and do not be wearied with my long letter. Indeed, dear Minette, I know you would not were its pages doubled. I would write some of Lacey, for he talked of nothing but you all the way from Naples, but he will add a line of his own which will interest you more, and so with my thoughts speeding these lines to you, and with my love ever greeting you, I am, always,

YOUR LOUISE."

There are periods in the life of every individual when some malign influence seems to overshadow them. Buffeted by adverse waves, struggle as they may, they cannot lift themselves out of the depression, the feeling of apprehension, the sense of impending evil, the gloom, an apparently ill fortune, seems to be gathering around them. Then some event, trifling perhaps it may seem to others, turns the tide, and again the broad sunlight plays within the soul and despair is conquered. To the troubled heart of Minette such a turning point was reached in the letter of Louise, and, sitting quietly with it still open in her hand, she felt stronger. The restless anxiety, and the sense of impending evil disappeared, and in returning faith and courage an enduring confidence brightened her heart. Then the rose tint lighted up her face, and the old sweet, loving smile played about her beautiful lips as she unsealed and slowly unfolded Lacey's letter, which she had all the time held tightly within her hand. She glanced at the page of coarse, broad lines, so different from the delicate tracing of Louise, fearing for

the moment to read, lest she should all too soon drink the full measure of her joy; then wondering what words he could have written. Had he spoken of his love? And then the rose tint came again and the smile and the angel's face.

Thus she played and toyed with her happiness, and then with quickened breath and heart set to print upon her memory every word and every thought of manly love she read:

"Dear Absent-Heart, Minette:—

"So fondly in my thoughts these opening words are lingering that I would fain commence again. I cannot form such lines, as it were fitting your eyes should look upon, for I have been taught to write rather with lance and sword on plates of steel, and yet to me they look, even from my coarse hand, as full of beauty as they seem full of music when alone I speak them to myself a hundred times each day. From the morning which began our separation I have counted every hour, and all the days, and thought how gladly I would live them over, turning the wheels of time backward to the night of the storm when the lightning's flash wrote the story of your love upon my heart; and then I try to count the coming days, full as they may be of harsher duty, yet passing, bring me ever nearer to you. Each morning sun I greet with joy that in its western path it bears my love to you, and at night, looking upward upon the sky, the stars tell me they, too, are watching at Touraine.

"I try to be ever hopeful, and then I feel reproach that thoughts of myself make me unmindful of the anxious hours that loving me has fraught perhaps with loneliness, perhaps with sorrow, or trial hard for you to bear; for knowing the temper of Guibert, I fear his importunity may press upon your father and force the struggle all too soon upon your gentle heart and I not there to shield you and turn aside the cloud. But, dear heart, should this be true, try to believe that, true to duty, to

ourselves, a power, stronger than human will or passion, will bring our souls together and end the separation of brief time in an eternity of joy. I feel certain that in this Crusade we shall enter Jerusalem and restore to the Lord His city and His Sepulchre; then duty will end and I shall come to you. I will no more enter upon wars or bloodshed, but together we will find the reward of our Christian loyalty in the warm sunshine of a never-fading love. 'Twas but yesterday I was thinking of my visit to Raymond and how grand the noble old man looked, invested with his years, for he is over sixty, sitting with his beautiful young wife, both so devoted, and the thought came into my mind that in the nursing of inexorable time, I, too, shall grow old like him, though I could not picture you as ever different, for it is the beauty of your soul I see and love. For just an instant there was present in my mind a touch of sadness in the conception that youth with its rounded form, its freshness and its strength cannot always last.

"Though we do not like to think of age, the lines will come, and if they deepen our affection, why should we not welcome them? Louise tells me I look sadder. She does not know that my face reflects nobler thoughts that have come from the influence of your love. So short a time ago, and I, like Tancred, gloried in the strength and skill with which I struck down a foe with whom I had no cause of quarrel. Now, I feel sorrow that, even in this holy war, my lance must carry pain and death. In your love my soul has grown, and in that growth has come a sense of greater power. Ambition seeks to win your pride in thoughts and deeds of Christian manliness. Dear Absent Heart, this letter brings to you only myself. My next may tell you of scenes in which I hope I may be full worthy of your pride and greater love. Be hopeful, for if, in our separation, night spreads its mantle, remember there will be dawn, and in your prayers forget not the soul of LACEY."

Every word of that manly letter went straight to the heart of Minette. A great happiness had come to her and when she least expected it. Separation was no

longer complete, for time and distance had been conquered and she could almost hear the tones of Lacey uttering the beautiful thoughts she had read. Louise had lifted her out of the quicksands of fear and dread, and the strong arm of Lacey had borne her to the firm ground of faith and confidence. No dreamy unrest troubled her repose that night, and the Count was delighted to see the old happy look upon her face when late the following morning the Bishop of Tours stopped on his return from Columbiers. She had read him most of the letter Louise had written, and he had been so interested that he asked her to read again before the Bishop the lines that told of the marshaling of the army, of Bohemond and Tancred, and of the great fleet almost ready to bear that Norman army away.

As she read, an expression of satisfaction passed over the Bishop's face.

"I know Bohemond well," he remarked; "he inherits all those qualities which made his father so formidable an antagonist. I was present last winter at a conference between Urban and himself in which the former detailed his own plans for the success of the Crusade, and warned him to be ever suspicious of the duplicity of Alexius. 'To your wisdom and valor,' he exclaimed, 'I look for the accomplishment of our hopes! Plant the banner of God over the walls of Jerusalem, and every ambition of your heart shall be gratified.' Godfrey and Raymond are brave men, both are filled with pious zeal, but where their stern courage fails the subtler genius of Bohemond will win. Tancred is scarcely his inferior. Never was there more polished noble or more skilful knight."

"And hear you," now replied the Count, "aught from Godfrey or Raymond?"

"Yes, from both; Raymond is even now among the rocky passes of the Alps. Godfrey faces the Huns in the very fields where the too eager crowds of Walter and Peter were destroyed. He would not mar the very beginning of the expedition by slaughter of those who bear the name of Christians, rude offspring though they be of heathen lands, scarce knowing the rudiments of our sacred church, but parleys and passes slowly by their cities of reeds and rough timber, and, marching through the open fields and valleys, takes only such scant provisions as he needs, paying for the same the unskilled tillers of the land. When Bohemond shall move, three giant armies will center on the Eastern capital, from whence a storm of holy anger from Christian France shall fall with mighty power on Turk and Saracen, and sweep onward to Jerusalem.

"But tell me," he continued, "about Guibert. I learned only yesterday before leaving Tours that he had taken ship at Bari with Hugh of Vermandois and other nobles from the North who will join Godfrey at Constantinople. It gave me great and glad surprise, because I understood, and it grieved me, that he whom I had blessed with my own hand at the betrothal ceremony of our fair daughter had always spoken ill of the Crusade."

The bishop did not see the expression of sudden alarm that appeared on the face of Minette. He was looking at the Count, and curiosity changed to surprise, as he witnessed the astonishment, perplexity, doubt and something like irritation that were successively manifested on the countenance of the old noble, and he marveled none the less when the Count replied:

"I had myself known Guibert's heart was not in the movement which has so stirred France, and respecting

his liberty of conscience I had never sought to influence his judgment, however proud I should have been in view of the relations that were settled under your authority at Tours, to have known that Touraine was represented by his courage at Jerusalem. A month ago he and his father were here and the object of their visit was a formal request by Count Luis for an immediate celebration of the marriage. I must confess to a feeling of pain at the thought of so soon parting with Minette, of whom, as you know, I have seen little since she has grown away from her childhood days, but I would have sacrificed my own joy in seeing for a time her sweet face around the old chateau, except that Minette herself had made a vow not to marry till Jerusalem was in Christian hands, and I could not but respect her piety, even as I loved herself."

"And you did right; the loyal devotion of a good woman is the safeguard to the ennobling influence of our religion. On that awful day at Golgotha it was woman who, braving the angry, surging throng, mourned and wept for Him who was to suffer."

"The following morning," continued the Count, "just as Count Luis was about to enter his carriage, he told me Guibert had determined to enter the Crusade, and I have heard nothing from Parthenay since."

The alarm of Minette was but a momentary weakness. The knowledge of Guibert's movements was what she most of all desired. It was only the suddenness of its coming that had startled her. With all her sweet, gentle ways, she had inherited her father's courage. The letters within her bosom had aroused a spirit of determined resistance. She would not idly wait the misery and ruin with which Guibert had threatened her. The kind words of the Bishop suggested a thought of

immediate action, and, rising, she asked if he knew when a vessel would sail again by which she could send a reply to the letter of Louise.

"Assuredly," he replied, "the same ship that brought your letter will return to Naples in a week, and between Naples and Taranto there are traders passing every day. You may have an hour to write, and I will myself send it from Tours down the river tomorrow."

Quickly Minette went to her room and wrote two letters, enclosing them in one addressed to Louise, just as she had before. To Louise she briefly related the circumstance of Guibert's sailing with Count Hugh, of his threat and of her own anxiety for Lacey. "I tremble," she said, "when I remember your words at our last meeting that your heart was oppressed with a foreboding of something dreadful that was to happen in which we were to be associated, and yet to your wisdom and vigilance my faith clings."

She then spoke of the letter she had sent by le Bon which Louise would receive at Constantinople. To Lacey she carefully described her conversation with Guibert, even the very words he had uttered. Then she spoke of the comfort and strength she had received from his noble letter, of her pride in the beautiful thoughts it expressed, and how its memory would sustain her even to the end of the Crusade. "I will answer it," she said, "as my heart dictates at the first opportunity, but I have now only a moment, as the Bishop is waiting to carry this to Tours, from whence it will be sent in another week to Louise. I write to warn you; it is all I can do. Whatever should happen you, will reach me."

Hastily sealing and addressing her letter, she entered the room where her father and the good Bishop were

still talking, and handing it to the latter, thanked him for the happiness he had given her as she knelt to receive his benediction. Then, again in her room, she walked softly across the floor, thinking, and repeating the words:

"There are now three of us." Suddenly she stopped in front of the window, and gazing out upon the golden sunlight of the autumn sky, exclaimed:

"Ah! there are four of us. I had forgotten le Bon."

CHAPTER VII

GUIBERT DE BARREAUX

ARTFULLY as Guibert's plans had been laid for that parting scene in the breakfast room of Touraine, they had failed through events he had been unable to control; the parting shaft at the door of the chateau had been well sped, but Count Luis was in no enviable frame of mind as his carriage rapidly rolled along over the road toward Parthenay. He was alarmed that his old friend was innocently unmindful of the turn affairs were taking, and yet he had not dared risk the consequences of boldly informing him of the change in Minette. Nor was he satisfied with the attitude of Guibert, whose want of tact had invited Minette to the very course she most desired. All day long they traveled the dusty road, scarcely exchanging a word, and stopping for the night at the little village of Chucon.

After the evening meal, which had been served in their own room, Count Luis remarked:

"I cannot refrain from again expressing to you, Guibert, my disapproval of the course you determined upon last night, and urging you to adopt wiser counsels. Under the conditions that have arisen the Crusade should have no place in your thoughts. With de Hauteville absent, beyond the possibility of immediate return, you should end a quarrel, which a very little wisdom on your part would have avoided, in a manner acceptable

to the pride of Minette, for she has all the spirit of her father. Here you have every advantage. She is very young and this sudden attachment may as suddenly end. Again, he may, and very likely will, be killed in the Crusade, and with your influence constantly around her, the betrothal still on the records of the church, still having the sanction of her father, old conditions may be easily renewed."

"I beg you to importune me no further," replied Guibert, "against the determination I outlined to you in our conversation last night. There is no other way. Your own words to the Count of Touraine have made any other course impossible. In spite of the apparent gentleness of Minette, she has all the stubbornness—well, call it firmness, if you will—of her father. Her attachment conceived in this spirit of madness which is rioting over France, will not cease until I end it, and end it I will with his life."

"Then, mark me well," replied the Count, "all our plans end in your folly. Force never yet won a woman's love. It is the weapon of unskilled thought. Wisdom reaches its ends by subtler means. If you kill Lacey, think you Minette will clasp the hand red with his blood? and if you fail, and the motive which leads you into the Crusade is discovered, disgrace and ruin will attend your return to France. For years I have based all my hopes for you on this marriage with Minette. I say, for you, since on that settlement depended your future position, your honor and the integrity of even my own estate. It matters little to me, for I am an old man and will soon be as free from the incumbrances of Parthenay as from the memory of my disappointment; but to you it means everything. With Minette your wife, wealth, position, honor; all are yours. Pur-

sue your mad folly, become a possible murderer, and your life opens upon a road that leads to irretrievable ruin."

To this Guibert made no reply, and seeing his words were without effect, the Count prepared for the night's rest.

It was late the following evening when they arrived at Parthenay. Two letters were awaiting Guibert, both of which had come by special messenger. One was from Count Hugh. It was written from Milan and announced that his expedition would sail in about three weeks from Bari, where he would be glad to have him join it. This was in answer to a letter Guibert had dispatched immediately on his first return from Touraine, for even when his farewell words were spoken to Minette during that scene in the arbor, his passion had already determined the course he would pursue should the request for an immediate marriage fail. The other bore no evidence on either side of whence it came. On the seal was a curious design around which were a few Greek letters, unintelligible to any in the household save Guibert. Examining the strange design, then covering it with his hand, he looked cautiously around, and finding his father had already retired, an expression difficult to define passed over his countenance; but he did not break the seal until he was alone in his own apartment.

The following day was occupied in preparation for his departure, and the second morning after his arrival at Parthenay he set out for Rochelle. At parting Count Luis took his hand and looked upon his relentless face without speaking a word, but within his heart was an emotion scarcely in harmony with his character. And yet he was not a bad man. In his early life it was his

manly qualities that had drawn him to the Count of Touraine. These had been warped in later years by adverse circumstances and his constant struggle to repair his declining fortune and restore the integrity of his estate. Evil as he knew him to be, Guibert was his only son, and last of his race, and looking upon his face during that parting scene he believed it was for the last time. He knew that revenge, possibly murder, possibly something worse, was in his heart, and that if he escaped the perils of the Crusade, he might be overtaken by the vengeance that would follow his act.

He did not know of the letter with the strange design, nor of its purport.

Rapidly Guibert galloped away, nor did he once turn his face back upon the quaint old walls of the chateau where he had been born. In his heart there was no regret, not even for his father, who stood still watching his retreating form, nor for the attendants who had grown old in service, nor even the hounds, his companions in the sport that had delighted his cruel nature. He did not even look at the little enclosure where his mother slept. He saw the rising sun passing behind a cloud of fantastic shape, as of giants fighting in the air, and as he sped along there was no sound save the beat of his horse's hoofs upon the dusty road. Hours passed by unheeded. He measured not the distance, nor did he feel fatigue, and when at the end of his long ride he entered the inn at Rochelle, after the evening meal was served, he sat apart from the others congregated there, hearing neither their stories nor their merriment.

Strange thought! that a man scarce more than entering the flush of manhood's strength, with the world ready to yield to his worthy ambition, honor, happiness, even riches and glory, did he seek them, should aban-

"HE HELD THE LETTER OVER ITS YELLOW FLAME AND WATCHED IT SLOWLY BURN TO THE VERY END."

don home and country and devote his whole soul to the one thought, the most unworthy, fatal, deadly passion that ever tormented and poisoned the human mind.

Later in the evening, alone in his room, he again unfolded the letter whose seal bore that strange design, and the second time carefully studied its contents; then he walked slowly back and forth across the floor of his room with the uncertain tread of a man determined on an end but unsettled in his mind as to the means to be employed for its most certain accomplishment. It was evident a conflict was disturbing him, and that it had arisen from whatever may have been the meaning of the letter he still held in his hand, stopping at intervals to reread some sentence or line as though almost doubting his understanding its full significance, for at one time his countenance lighted up with a savage joy and his hands were clenched as though he already witnessed the impotent struggles of his victims as the coils of his revenge were being drawn around them, ever tightening at his will; and at another a sudden pallor drove the blood from his face, leaving there a startled, almost frightened look, and he glanced fearfully around and tried the door to see if it were fastened lest the beating of his heart should betray his secret thoughts. Then pausing before the light, whose dim rays scarce conquered half the darkness of the room, he held the letter over its yellow flame and watched it slowly burn to the very end, till naught remained save a darkened, curling cindery leaf that at his touch fell in feathery fragments on the rude stand before him. Carefully gathering them all, searching even the floor that not a trace was left, he approached the window and tossed them out upon the night winds, which bore them through the darkness over the housetop and scattered them through the for-

ests and over the meadows, miles away, hiding every secret they had borne to burn within a human soul. Then folding his arms, he exclaimed:

"It is fate! there is no other way, no other way."

And, with quickened breath, again his eyes wandered nervously around the room; once more he tried the door and peered into the darkened corners and every spot whose gloom might have concealed a human form, fearing the secret his tongue had never uttered might thus be known. Then removing his clothes, and extinguishing the light, whose single sickly ray had burned as if in solemn protest, he sought within the bed forgetfulness till the morning light should banish the terrors that his own mind had so strangely conjured. Try as he would, however, sleep refused his hopes. Uneasily he turned from side to side, his thoughts, impossible to control, ever returning to the one passion to which his own ungovernable will had made him a slave. Was it possible that even in his heart there was still some force of conscience which, all unrecognized, was troubling him with nervous doubt, or was it that the words he had spoken, "there is no other way," foretold a secret pact to which he was consenting, and which yet alarmed him? Minutes passed into hours; the moon, in its last quarter, cast a pale light into the room, and ever his opened, staring eyes in fancy rested on ghostly forms moving in the shadowy recesses. Thus the long night, longer than any he had ever known, passed, and almost at the morning's dawn, exhausted, he sank into a slumber so deep that the bright daylight drove away the fancied spectral shadows, the warm sunlight entered and played about the room, the birds sang their merry matin and all the glad sounds of waking life were unheeded as he still lay unconscious.

CHAPTER VIII

LOUISE AND TANCRED

THE summer had long since ended; a summer ever memorable in the annals of France. The yellow and the orange had faded into the brown, and a once grateful shade of the rich foliage no longer offered an inviting refuge from the warm sun.

Guibert, whom we left sleeping, in the early hours of the morning, at the little hostelry in Rochelle, had joined the expedition of Count Hugh and was now waiting the ship which was to bear them across the sea. Godfrey was just emerging from the mountain passes of southern Bulgaria and entering the more generous plains and valleys scarce two hundred miles from the Eastern capital. Raymond was steadily moving eastward through Dalmatia, and Bohemond was nearly ready to embark his splendid army at Taranto, and with ever-zealous hearts and earnest hopes, France was waiting.

If the long days had brought to Minette alternating anxiety and confidence, so also with Louise they were full of equally serious thought. She had just received Minette's letter and was quick to understand that her fear was not without reason. She felt, too, the full force of the silent appeal of that absent heart. How should she act? What could she do? She read the letter to Lacey and gave him the one directed to himself. He

held it within his hand, for he would not look at it until he was alone, and then he listened again to Louise, and treasured every word in his memory, every word that she, Minette, had written. Her own hand had traced the lines and all in love for him. He smiled at her fears, but he was happy they were for him.

"Lacey," exclaimed Louise, placing her hand upon his, "you are noble and good, but are you worthy the love of Minette, if you do not attend to her words? Recollect that in your safety lies her fate. Do not devote your thoughts alone to the smiles of love. Do not trust to your courage and strength. Bravery has yielded to craft a thousand times. Remember it is her life you are guarding as well as your own."

"My dear cousin," replied Lacey, "I thank you for your words. I love you for the love you bear Minette, but is there aught of danger here? Guibert is far away. It will be a month at least before the entire expedition may be together; until then does it not relieve your thoughts to know he is where his influence can do Minette no harm? In all that time we may counsel together. You are a woman; much of your life has been passed with her, and you know all her gentle ways. She trusts you and so, loving her, will I. Tell me your plans for her safety and I will be as obedient to them as a soldier should to the words of his chief."

"Nobly said! Ever watchful we will counsel together for her. We have at least a month, and when we reach the other armies we shall hear from her again, for she has sent another letter by one of Raymond's knights, and in that one we may find more to guide our efforts."

At that moment there was a slight noise at the entrance of the room; the tapestries parted and Tancred stood before them. On his countenance was an ex-

pression of startled surprise, which passing, left a tinge of red upon his cheeks.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "I did not know—excuse me," and turning with some dignity was about to retire, when Louise arose quickly, saying, "do not go, Tancred, we need you," and taking his arm seated him beside Lacey.

"Surely," she continued, "it is something more than chance that brought you here at this moment. No knight among the Normans or in France has a reputation your equal for honor, gallantry, sentiment and devotion to your friends. Forgive me, and believe that only circumstances of strongest appeal, dangers that are unknown and unmeasured, give me courage to ask you to share a confidence that belongs to Lacey, myself and one other, the gentlest and loveliest of her sex, and to beg your aid."

The face of Tancred beamed with pleasure. Mystery and danger were his delight, and back of this was something not quite understood by himself that made his heart beat a little quicker as he listened to the words of Louise and looked into the eyes that even more earnestly entreated him.

"I shall be honored," he replied, "by whatever confidence you give me, but believe, Mademoiselle Louise, I should be unworthy your esteem did I require more than your command. The honor of a knight needs no better safeguard than your wisdom."

Without further words, Louise related the story of the unfortunate betrothal of Guibert and Minette, the meeting in the arbor, the threats of Guibert, his sudden resolution, his presence with Count Hugh and the appeal of Minette.

"And, since our confidence is shared," exclaimed Lacey, "I will add one other incident which you, Louise,

did not know, nor does Minette." Then, while the eyes of Louise opened wide with surprised attention, and Tancred's gleamed with fierce delight, he told of the challenge and the duel. "To you, Tancred," he continued, "I owe an easy victory, and I would not now speak of it, but that it illustrates the character and temper of the man with whom we have to deal."

"Say no more," replied Tancred, taking within his own the hands of Louise and Lacey; "our compact is sealed. You, Lacey, may not strike; it is not fitting. That shall be my duty when assured of his intent."

"Let us hope there may be no need," replied Lacey, "and now, with your permission, I will go to Bohemond. He desires to instruct me in reference to the embarking of my company."

Nothing could have pleased Tancred better, for strong as was the bond of friendship between himself and Lacey, greatly as he enjoyed his companionship, he desired nothing so much at that moment as to be alone with Louise. Ever since her arrival at the castle she had attracted him. When in the hour of their first acquaintance, he was showing her the great fleet of ships that was to bear away the army whose strength and numbers she had just witnessed, her words, different from those he had been accustomed to hear, surprised him into an interest that day by day had grown into a deeper sentiment, the strength of which was not yet quite recognized by himself. Always a favorite with the opposite sex, his magnificent bearing, his skill in the tournament, his gallantry and polished manners, won for him never-ceasing compliments from maid and matron of every station. All these adulations were gratifying to his pride, pleasing to his vanity; but like the grateful breeze of an autumn evening that fills the air with balmy

fragrance, they passed lightly by, leaving naught beyond himself. Louise was so different and withal so unlike himself. She puzzled him. A word from her of commendation he would have treasured in his heart, and repeated it to himself as he never had the praise of others, and yet none ever came. He had talked with her of the Crusade, and listening in wonder to the eloquence that opposed his will, forgot for the moment the brightness of her eyes in the beauty of the soul within. He knew that in her presence was something different from any sentiment he had ever felt before. Was it but that strange desire in noblest manhood to ever strive for that which in subtle gentleness repels, and yet, persuasive, lingers on the outer line of our attainment; or was it love?

Always an accomplished master of every situation, why did he sit in silent embarrassment when Lacey had left them? Had he a purpose formed or was it an impulse, half defined, that pleased him to be alone with Louise, who sat wondering, and then with woman's ready tact, herself checked the confusion of his thoughts.

"I am glad you remained, Tancred," she exclaimed, "for I can easier thank you, alone, for the confidence your words have given me. With your aid danger seems already passed. When you know Minette you will be better paid."

"It needs but your own desire, fair Louise, to command my devotion. It shall be my delight to guard your friend, but shall I be less loyal to her if I add that it would be a greater happiness were there that in which I could serve you alone."

"And you are serving me, Tancred, even as much as if misfortune to myself brought me your quick and generous aid."

"I would not wish that evil or danger of any kind should threaten you, and yet, pardon me, if a thought, a foolish dream of flying to intercept the blow about to fall on you, and winning from your heart a look in which a trace of—of some regard were present, has oft filled my soul with pleasing fancies."

"I am not insensible that your noble character finds delight in worthy deeds; indeed, does not every one know that among the chiefs and nobles and most chivalrous knights, there is, in all Italy, and France as well, but one Tancred?"

"Ah! Louise, you are so different from other women."

"Am I?"

"Yes; you will not understand me. I would seek some tone of softer sentiment, and you give me but the compliments that have fallen a hundred times, unheeded, from other lips."

"And are mine, then, alike unheeded?"

"I said you were different."

"Do not think me insincere, or that my words conveyed no truer thought than the praise that escapes from polished lips. It was my grateful heart that gave them birth."

"And I will ever treasure them; nor can I tell you half the pleasure they have given me. Louise, it was seeking you I entered here. I knew not why, except that in your presence is something in which I forget myself. In the trust with which you honored me there came a feeling that confidence and friendship, and something even deeper are very near together, and I felt that I must tell you of the thoughts that would not let me rest; thoughts that arose that day when first seeing you I pointed out the great fleet in the harbor, and that have ever since dwelt in my heart. When you have chided me for my love of

battle and my enthusiasm in the Crusade, I have looked into your eyes and marveled that I could not answer you; and more; that your words of censure were pleasant to my ears. I grew to listen to your voice as one does to the softest notes of music, to see in your face something I did not find in other women, in your eyes a light that seemed to shine from a soul hidden within. I could not understand myself, nor do I now, that I, in your presence, should fail of speech, and that dreams should come that never had a place within my heart before; that your smile, your every movement, even the rustle of your dress, filled me with strange delight, and tempted me to draw ever nearer to you. And all the time nobler and gentler thoughts have come to me, and my soul has grown, even as though it were a child seeking to reach a standard set by you, and pass beyond it to loftier heights, winning from you approval, nor that alone, for in this new and worthier growth I would pass beyond the possibilities of other men: Louise, I would win your love."

Louise had listened to the words of Tancred with conflicting emotions of pleasure and regret. Gladly would she have escaped them that moment, had it been possible. She was not indifferent to the sentiment he had so beautifully expressed. She could not deny to herself that she was attracted to him. That she should like him, the most generous of knights and peer even of Bohemond, was not strange, but that the feelings with which he had inspired her approached to the sentiment of love, she was by no means certain. At a distance his martial bearing, his conscious strength, his dignity and courtly appearance, won her admiration, but in his presence she was impressed with something akin to fear, or dread; something she could not understand.

For some moments she sat silent; then controlling her embarrassment, she replied in her own sincere, earnest way:

"I do already love you, Tancred,"—then gently raising her hand to check his quick movement of rapturous delight—continued, "not, perhaps, according to your thoughts, at least not yet. I love your noble nature, whose brighter light dims the unreal glories you have long indulged in; your loyalty, which, unquestioning, comes to me and fills my heart with new confidence; and most of all, I love the heart that has just spoken words that have so honored me, and that have elevated you to an exalted plane, where I may look upward to you with ever-growing pride. Believe me, Tancred, more I would gladly say. I am indeed grateful, and I will try to think, to feel as you wish, but I do not know my own heart. Give me a little time. Before me is a dread picture, and yet all undefined; a picture of night, if that could be, and peering into the darkness I am ever trying to behold something I fear, something I would not look upon."

A moment longer her lips moved, but words would not come, and covering her face with her hands, she tried to conceal the expression of pain and fear, and the tears that were starting.

"Do not weep," replied Tancred; "I will be content to wait and hope that in some day of the future, I know not how distant, I may be as necessary to your life as you are to mine, worthy then the rich treasure of your love."

"And shall we still ever be as loving friends?"

"Forever."

CHAPTER IX

THE SHIPWRECK

A SHIP was sailing upon the waters of the Adriatic Sea; sailing, and yet it scarcely moved, such was the dead calm over the glassy surface. Every yard of canvas was set to catch each breath of wind that had almost refused its aid. Upon the deck is Count Hugh, Stephen of Chartres, Robert of Flanders, and Duke Robert of Normandy, son of William the Conqueror, and with them is Guibert. Only the day before they had sailed from the little port of Bari, scarce a hundred miles from the castle of Bohemond, where Louise waited, wishing the days were longer, dreading each dawn and rising sun that brought nearer the day of departure, and little dreaming that he, who she now knew was an enemy more dreaded than Turk or Saracen, was so near. When, the morning before, the vessel had moved out of the harbor the bells of the convent and the churches rang joyously, and the people gathered, some with cheers of pious zeal and others wondering, for it was not France. Midway upon the sea, the ship was unable to move toward the Mediterranean, whence it would have sailed past the interminable islands of the Grecian Archipelago,

onward toward the "Golden City." Impatiently the Crusaders walked the deck, to and fro, now searching the cloudless space above, and again speaking together of the Crusade and of their plans for meeting Godfrey. Almost in silence Guibert, most of all impatient, had listened to their counsels and then walked apart gazing toward the coast they had left behind, and whose rough outline had long since disappeared. He had been very near to Lacey. Why had he not sought him and ended it all? Many times while waiting at Bari the temptation had come, and as often something had whispered: it is not yet time.

All the long day the vast expanse of sea about them had been scarce moved by the still air, and the glassy waters had reflected to the sky a light that dazzled like the sun. Now, out of the haziness that was beginning to gather about the horizon, and over the sea around them, there were clouds forming. No longer was the dazzling light reflected; currents of air came, uncertain at first, but ominous and chilling as they filled out the loose sails. The ship moved a little faster upon the sea, over whose broad surface little ripples were playing together. And the winds came, now gently; then with greater strength, and with sudden rushes and as quick retreats, as though frightened at their own boldness. And the little ripples, that had played so gently, became waves that first danced in seeming merriment, then buffeted each other in ruder sport, and as they rushed apart their white caps seemed to be throwing every minute a million kisses to Neptune. Still swifter sailed the ship, and the quick gusts, no longer uncertain, or in sportive mood, struck them angrily, and the waves, maddened with the buffeting, leaped upon each other, foaming. All over the heavens the clouds had thickened

and were now whirling and packing together in ever darkening masses. The fierce winds whistled through the rigging of the ship, dashed themselves against its trembling sides and shrieked past the poles, bared by the startled sailors' hands, then went screaming over the waters, lashing them into seething, boiling foam, till in their mad fury they tried to spring, each over the other, and lifting themselves higher yet, leaped upon the ship, pounded and battered it, and then in greater rage, rising high above it, mountains of angry water, they fell upon the deck and would have torn it apart and dragged the fated vessel, shivering, crushed, beneath their furious foam, burying it deep within the bosom of the sea. High in the air they lifted it, and then hurled it toward awful chasms where they might hold it in deadly embrace.

And the darkness and the night came. All through the long hours the fated vessel struggled and fought with the storm, each living soul, within its shivering sides, having his own fearful story. Then, over the wild scene there came, out of the darkness, just a glimmer of light, and with it the terrible fury of the storm lessened, as though exhausted with its own violence; but the waves still beat and foamed and hissed as they pushed each other into the air and fell upon the ship, which still rushed through the waters. There is something now that rises above the dying wind and the lashing waves: a dull, roaring sound like the low rumbling of distant thunder, except that it never ceases. The plunging and rolling of the ship is not so violent, but it seems to be borne forward by a power stronger than the wind. The Crusaders, as well as the sailors, creep to the deck, some holding to ropes and others lashing themselves to the poles. Fearfully they look over the awful scene. All around them are wildly tossing waters, into and over

which they are plunging. Above, the clouds are lighter, and where the still leaping waves seem to strike the eastern sky there is a rosy tint which broadens while the long line of white foam glistens. There are little patches of blue here and there in the space above them.

Dawn has come, and the sun, lingering a moment, is just silvering the crests of the waves it would first smile upon. More beautiful grows the picture, grander the silvery line, but the faces of the Crusaders are blanched, for they know now the meaning of the strange sound that has risen above the noise of the sea around them. No longer do giant waves struggle together, but a rolling mountain hurls the ship toward the silvery line; then, as if in mocking sport, gathers it back into the depths, and then with greater power rushes it again at frightful speed, and again draws it away. On the deck the Crusaders are now standing. Never before has death's visage seemed so terribly near, and powerless they watch the white surf ploughing the shore line and lifting into the air the sandy soil; and they count the moments, looking backward and wondering which of the monstrous rolling waves behind shall drive their frail vessel fast upon the shore and batter it to pieces.

Among them Guibert stands, taller than the rest, his left hand firmly clutching a rope that dangles from the forward pole. Not a muscle of his iron face moves as he gazes at the line of doom. He does not fear death, for he does not expect it. Within his bosom is a determined purpose which even the dread demon cannot stay. With careful eye he watches everything. Far beyond the shimmering line he sees the old city of Durazzo, and looks curiously at the tall Byzantine citadel, whose stony walls, still wet with the storm,

glisten in the sunlight. He hears bells ringing and sees people issuing from the gates. In the distance they look like soldiers And as the ship is driven nearer he sees fishermen upon the shore. He feels a jar and a shiver of the vessel as it recedes again into the dark waters, back into a wave, which higher than the others, holds it a moment, and then hurls it with mighty power upon the sands, and washing over it, crashes and tears apart its sides, leaving it wrecked, a mass of floating, shapeless timbers. And the waves seize him, drag him back into their foam and dash him against the shore. He clutches the sands and struggles with them as they tear him away and bury him again, and then on their boiling crests bear him swiftly back. He grasps a rope a fisherman has thrown to him, and holds tightly in his desperate fight as the relentless waters come again and foam and tear the sand about him, and then defeated leave him to be pulled ashore, panting.

One by one all were saved but a few soldiers whose less resolute souls yielded to the terrible force of the frightful demon waves that swept their bodies, again and again, and then left them crushed and lifeless upon the shore among the broken timbers of the ship.

The soldiers that Guibert had seen now gathered about the chiefs and questioned them, whence they came and their purpose, nor did their answers meet returning zeal, for they were no longer in France or even Italy, nor under the influence of Norman Power, and on the eastern shore the bells did not ring for the Crusade.

To the pride of Hugh and Duke Robert it was a sore trial. They, who but the morning of the previous day had sailed with such lofty ambition, could ill brook the inhospitable spirit of their inquisitorial captors, but,

drawn from the embrace of the waters, with insufficient power to assert their dignity, they were forced to submit. To Guibert it was a matter of indifference, and it was rather with a feeling of satisfaction he listened to the announcement that they must be conveyed to the Emperor at Constantinople, and yet his heart beat a little quicker when he thought of the letter he had destroyed at the inn at Rochelle.

Arrived at the Eastern capital after the long wearisome journey, the little band of Crusaders were taken before the Emperor. Alexius had no need to question their motive. Zeal and piety he knew led the spirits of these bold chiefs, but wiser than they, he knew, too, that behind these qualities were ambition, love of conquest and glory.

He feared the enthusiasm of the West as much as he did the constant encroachment of the East, but he was too artful to openly assail a power with whose force he was not yet fully acquainted. Addressing the little company, he exclaimed:

"I regret, nobles of France, if in their loyal zeal those who guard my empire have given you unseemly annoyance. You are no longer prisoners. Apartments fitting your station shall, from this day, be yours, and I would see you each morning at my court that we may come to be greater friends."

Thus were they still bound, but on terms that in no way wounded their pride; and charmed by an apparent honor, empty though he knew it to be, Count Hugh replied:

"The words of your imperial majesty have given us cause to rejoice at the very hardships which have brought us into your presence, and were it not for the sacred duty to which we are sworn we should almost

regret the near approach of Godfrey and Raymond, with whom we are solemnly bound for scenes and deeds that, ever for the greater glory of God, may not be without advantage to your majesty."

The interview ended with many expressions of esteem, for while Alexius was determined the nobles should not depart, he desired, at least for the present, to conciliate rather than offend them with the feeling that they were prisoners.

During the entire interview Guibert had been a silent but attentive listener. He was not sorry at the turn affairs had taken, except that in that spot a thought oppressed him, a thought of that which fostered his desire and yet most of all he dreaded. The last of that little company who were being conducted to the apartments that were to be assigned to them, he had just stepped outside the spacious hall where they had been received by the emperor, when a hand touched his shoulder, and turning quickly in a startled way he looked upon a face seriously expressive, a face that belonged neither to impulsive France nor to the luxurious capital of the East. In another instant, and before he had time for even a questioning look, a voice, commanding and strangely distinct, yet scarcely above a whisper, sounded in his ear:

"When the last rays of the sun disappear in the west, be at the inner gate of the palace; one will await you who knows of your coming," and before he could recover his surprise, or find words for speech, the drapery behind parted and the face disappeared as suddenly as it had been presented.

No one but himself had seen or heard. He alone, of all that band, had thoughts he could not utter, a fear, bold though he was, of what he could not speak, and

all that day he walked alone, nor could he join in social converse with those whose dangers he had shared and sworn a loyalty. Determined on his course when he had said, "There is no other way," now that he knew the time had come, he hesitated and argued with himself. Nor did he feel that conscience made of him a coward; was it not rather pride that essayed within even to conquer the passion of revenge that tortured him. And his thoughts went back through the storm and peril, back to France, to his old father, alone to bear reproach that he might bring, to Minette, and then to Lacey, and passion came again, deepening the lines about his mouth. His face hardened and he again courted the shame and danger, and watched impatiently the now declining sun that measured the hours that lay between himself and fate.

It is the hour, and behind the towers and walls the sun is hiding from his view. He passes out, away from the companions who, merry with the evening meal, with wine and mirth and jest, notice not his going. It is but a step to the inner gate. There is no one in sight. He walks slowly, passes the gate and turns again nervously, and feels his sword, whose touch gives him greater confidence. Perhaps no one will come! and the thought grows into a wish; vain hope! a light step behind and a hand rests upon his arm. He starts as he turns quickly, and looks into the same serious eyes and hears the same voice say in French almost as perfect as his own:

"Monsieur is prompt; come with me, for you are already waited."

At the outer gate his unknown guide spoke in a low voice to the guard words that Guibert did not under-

stand. Passing outside, his companion, taking his arm firmly, whispered:

"We will now walk rapidly and speak to no one we meet. It is but a short distance."

Many people were on the street, traders and laborers returning to their homes, and there were soldiers and guards who eyed them curiously, and men of other nations, and beggars who pulled at their cloaks; and now there are those who hang about the harbors, watching the ships as they come in, and living on the few coins they get unloading them; and sailors just landed seeking the pleasures of the city. And then upon the air is the smell of water and as they suddenly turn into another passage they look upon the sea, its waters dark and ominous in the shadows that are gathering, and Guibert shivers a little in the chill air. Before a building that seems deserted of every sign of human life, and stands upon the very waters' edge, they stop and the guide knocks. A moment's silence, and listening they hear footsteps coming down steps that creak under the pressure of added weight. A bolt is drawn and the door moves cautiously, barely ajar, and from this slight opening a face looks suspiciously upon them. A gleam of intelligence flashes between the face and the guide; the door opens wider, and Guibert is led inside, a few words pass in a tongue unknown to him between his companion and he who has admitted them, and then the three ascend the creaking steps and enter a room which looks out upon the sea; and noticing everything, Guibert sees a vessel of curious build, firmly secured below, so close that its low sides almost touch the house. The deck is deserted, but from the half-raised hatch he imagines something like a head appears quickly, and is as suddenly withdrawn. Perhaps it was

but fancy. Other ships are near and from them lights are beginning to flash, for the night is advancing. A door opens and two men enter the room. Upon their heads are close-fitting caps and they are attired in robes such as might be worn by Turkish officers. His companion and the one who met him at the door salute them with seeming reverence, and addressing himself to him who seems of greater dignity, the former exclaims:

"He whom you have come to meet is in your presence, most brave and worthy Bagi Sijan; Guibert de Barreaux, of Parthenay, in France."

As the name Bagi Sijan was spoken a quick expression of intelligence passed over the countenance of Guibert, and his face, first slightly flushed, became whiter than before, as he inclined his head forward in acknowledgment.

"I am indeed gratified to see you," exclaimed Bagi Sijan in French, "so much sooner than I had expected, and all the more so that time presses. I am told you have not yielded to the frenzy that has fallen on France, and would perhaps not hesitate to aid a cause supported by the right if that aid were fittingly requited? You received my letter?"

"I did, but answered not, for fateful words are easier spoken and leave no trace."

"Your speech is wise, and urges me to greater confidence. Are we then agreed, and do you accept our offer?"

"What shall you require?"

"Much. I would not dwell lightly on the service we shall ask. Of the armies that are coming and their numbers, and of those who lead them we already know. When these shall have crossed the waters and begun

the march toward that holy city God has placed within our keeping, we must then be quickly learned of all their plans; what cities they would first attack, that we may be vigilant in their defense; if there be quarrel among their leaders, and if they shall separate, that we may be quick to take advantage. Of every detail in their movements we must be well informed, and in our secret meetings which, however fraught with danger, must be oft and constant, as may be possible in time or circumstance, we shall give you instructions, such as may be difficult and often full of peril. This done, such wealth as you may ask shall be yours, nor shall we question the amount."

"All you ask I will undertake, and more if needs arise. I fear not danger or fatigue. But there must be one condition. Beyond that I need I seek not wealth, but I would have a promise that whatever I may demand, not impossible to Corbogha, or Kilidge-Arslan, or to the Caliph himself, may not be denied."

After a moment's thought, Bagi Sijan replied: "I will bring you this promise under the seal of the Caliph himself at our next meeting. Where that may be I cannot now tell you, but you will be informed and a way provided."

"All is then settled. I expect the promise, and you may rest in confidence that I will not fail your desire, for that has happened me which will make me faithful in the certainty of a reward that will cost you little."

With these words, the two men, different in nationality, religion, character and purpose, joined hands, looked for a moment straight into each other's eyes, and then, with the guide who had accompanied him there, Guibert walked down the creaky steps and out into the darkness that had settled over the city.

As silently as they had come, they returned to the palace. Again the word was whispered to the guard and the gate opened. It was but a step along the outer walk past the beautiful gardens among which were the imperial buildings, and they were at the apartments of the French nobles. Here his companion left him, and he passed in alone.

CHAPTER X

DUPLICITY OF ALEXIUS

DURING the time these events were taking place Godfrey had been nearing the city. With anger he learned of the detention of Hugh by Alexius, nor was he less indignant that the Count, charmed by the hospitality and gracious attentions of the Emperor, was much more contented to remain and do him homage than to sternly fulfill the obligations he had undertaken. Sending a messenger to Raymond, who was then not far from Rodosto, to hasten forward with all possible dispatch, he advanced from Philippolis, where his army was resting, and on Christmas morning appeared before the walls of the capital and demanded of the Emperor the immediate release of the French nobles.

A week before, the splendid army of Bohemond was fully embarked and had sailed out of the harbor of Taranto. Never, it seemed to the people of that city, was there a sight so grand as the great fleet of four hundred vessels of four sails and the thousand transports that moved slowly down the bay and out toward

the sea. It was a forest of masts, a vast canopy of sails, covering the waters as far as the eye could reach, and from which there came back, floating on the air, the sound of music and cheers. Leading, was the ship that carried Bohemond and on it were Tancred, Lacey and Louise. With Louise on board, and his heart bounding with enthusiasm, the face of Tancred expressed his keen delight. Lacey walked over the deck quietly but with firm step. He was thinking of Minette, and that the winds with which the sails were swelling, were bearing him farther away from her, and yet toward her, for at the end of it all was her sweet face, waiting. And Louise, of what was she thinking as she stood silently looking backward over the waters that were widening, and watched the castle and the crowds that still stood looking? Was it of scenes farther away? Of the convent of Tours? Of peaceful, happy days that were gone? Of beautiful Touraine, and Minette? Can we read in her dreamy eyes of a courage loftier, deeper than that of the Crusaders around her; a courage not of impulse, or enthusiasm, or piety, or passion, a courage that endures and elevates her to a standard higher than man, a courage of the soul?

To the bold demand of Godfrey, Alexius listened with no little disquiet. Gladly enough would he have witnessed the destruction of his enemies in the East could he have been assured that possession of the Holy Sepulchre would have satisfied the ambition of the West, but if Turk and Saracen had wrested from his empire the rich cities across the narrow sea and were ever looking with covetous eyes upon his capital, so, also, was there in Rome an equally dangerous foe. In every direction he saw an enemy. His frontiers threatened, and the sea no less hostile than the land, he saw in the ban-

ners of the cross a danger no less menacing than in the crescent from which he had already suffered. That he was accomplished in the art of dissimulation and deceit, too, is perhaps best illustrated by his wife Irene, when at his death, having in his last agony breathed an ejaculation of regret at the vanity of the world, she exclaimed, "You die as you have lived, a hypocrite." He well knew the character of Godfrey and his strength, nor was he ignorant that the still greater army of Raymond was already near, and that the fleet of his old and more ambitious enemy, Bohemond, was upon the sea.

With every expression, therefore, of good will, he received Godfrey at his court, and yielded at once to his request, disclaiming any other intention than courtesy to an honored guest in his treatment of Hugh, who was by no means displeased with the attentions shown him. But Godfrey was not satisfied with this settlement of a matter which was really of small moment. Many things were needed, chief among which were provisions for his army and vessels to transport them across the narrow sea. We must believe that both he and Raymond were without ambition or design further than to accomplish the one expressed object of the Crusade. Why should not Alexius, therefore, a Christian emperor whose duties and responsibility were equal to his own, at least aid the enterprise?

Addressing the Emperor he exclaimed, "So far, then, we are satisfied, but this is not all; we must have transports and our army must be fed. Why, also, should we not ask your active aid in that which our greater piety will make to your advantage?"

"For the support of your army," replied Alexius, "food you may purchase. Of transports, I know not where sufficient may be found; and if they were, what

profit is mine if the cities over the sea shall but change masters?"

"And will you then sit idly? Have you no concern? Are you unvexed in the memory of Jerusalem, of Damascus, Palmyra, Antioch, Sardis, Niceæ, and all those noble cities that were once the glory of your empire? Have you forgotten the story of massacre and wrong, and of the attempts that were twice made upon your capital?"

"All this, those who before me, sat within these walls, suffered through zeal as fraught with piety as your own. Think you I have naught to fear from the ambition of Rome? But let us have further talk tomorrow. Today I would show you our royal gardens and win your kinder thoughts with courtly honors."

Thus, day by day, with lavish hand and artful tongue, Alexius won even the stern Duke, and almost on the eve of Raymond's arrival, taking him aside he exclaimed:

"Pledge me thy fealty and that thou wilt restore to me such of my cities as shall fall to thy sword, and all things thou shalt have to thy full desire."

"Then the compact is made, and I pledge my fealty so long as I remain within your borders."

"And from this moment thou art my son."

With Raymond, the Emperor had a harder task. Coming with one intent, he, who scarcely acknowledged himself vassal of the King of France, refused a foreign master, nor could threats nor courtly honors move his temper or the calm majesty of his single purpose. It was not the messenger of Godfrey alone that had hastened his coming, for secret emissaries of the Emperor had urged the Greeks at Rodosto to hasten his presence, and leaving his main army at that city he had answered the double call. It was the one serious mis-

take of Alexius, that failing to make subject the stern soldier by artful promise or bolder threat, he sent orders to the Greeks to destroy his army. Adhemar, the legate of Urban, second only to himself, was in command. It was night and the army slumbered. No thought of danger stirred the camp. Upon the air is an ominous sound: 'tis the death cry of a sentinel as he falls beneath the fatal blow. Another, and then a rush, and swords gleam in the darkness. The Crusaders wake and fly. Confusion reigns, and Adhemar is powerless amid the ruin and death around him. A few brave hearts gather and stay the blows his own hands could not resist. Slowly they are beaten down, and, one by one, are finding Crusaders' graves in Christian lands. Now one utters a joyful cry. It is answered by the harsher ringing of steel and shouts, a lance strikes a tall Greek whose unresisted sword is aimed at Adhemar. It is the weapon of le Bon and now it strikes again and again. A thousand are behind him, and the treacherous Greeks meet a forest of steel. One more terrible onslaught bravely resisted and fearfully returned, and the Greeks fly as the whole army of Crusaders return to the battle.

Hearing of the affair, Raymond was furious. Striding into the presence of Alexius he exclaimed:

"So we are to endure your treachery as well as insolence. Your empire will not repay the loss of my soldiers."

"I can the more easily pardon your words," replied the Emperor, "that I acknowledge their seeming justice, with the affair still unquestioned by you; but you will learn the unhappy strife was not of my intent. My loyal Greeks are over zealous, and in their temper have misconstrued my meaning."

"If this be true it were but the measure of justice they

should suffer the penalty. The destruction, once visited by barbarian hands upon Rodosto, should be multiplied by my Crusaders, whose slain brothers call for vengeance, until not one stone is left upon another to mark the profane spot."

Godfrey had now arrived. His noble soul was centered on the one purpose. It was that naught should interfere with this, his promises had been made to the Emperor; and uneasy now at the prospect of a strife which might delay, if not defeat the success of the expedition, he exclaimed:

"Let us be ruled, Raymond, by moderation. You, at least, have made a vow to but one Master. To God alone is your allegiance given. Before us both, before every one of noble blood, before every brave knight, and every loyal soldier, is a duty, the fulfillment of which we may not safely, or consistent with our sacred obligations, imperil by bloody strife, however just the cause, with subjects of a Christian Emperor."

Alexius sat shrewdly weighing each word and watching its effect; and he now waited Raymond's reply with anxious interest. Before the latter could speak, however, a curious incident occurred impossible of conception save in the days of chivalry and feudal domination. Count Robert of Paris, an independent noble, better skilled in the handling of his sword than in the ruling of his speech, went over to the Emperor and with an air of perfect equality sat down by his side. Baldwin, count of Hainault, immediately took his arm and led him away, saying, "We are no longer in Paris, or even France. When you are in a country you must respect its master and its customs."

"Verily," replied Robert, "you may be right; but is

it not shocking that this Jackanapes should remain seated whilst so many noble captains are standing?"

Alexius was not a man to permit his offended dignity to interfere with the success of a deeper purpose. He was rather amused at the incident, illustrating, as he thought, the disintegrating influences that were within the crusading armies, and prompt to take advantage of its effect which he detected in the quick glance between Godfrey and Raymond, and the flush upon the face of the latter, he arose, and, approaching him, exclaimed in a low voice:

"It were wise, Raymond, to be satisfied with an apology for my Greeks. Let our counsel be ruled by friendship. Believe me, such reparation shall be made in aid of your plans as shall be satisfying to your dignity; nor will I ask your fealty. Let it suffice you are my friend and owe obedience to God alone, Who rules us both."

"Let it then pass," answered Raymond, "I am content if there be no further hindrance of our plans, and means may be provided for us to cross the waters that in their depths mock our impatience."

"For that we will take further counsel," replied Alexius; then turning to Count Robert, with a humorous air, he exclaimed:

"And may I ask who and of what degree you are? for I would know more of him who beside the Emperor has sat while noble chiefs were standing."

"I," replied Robert, no ways disconcerted, "am a Frenchman, and of noble birth. In my country there is, not far from a church, a quiet spot, where, undisturbed, those may and often do repair, who burn to prove their valor, and it may interest you to know I have often been

there myself and waited, finding no one whose courage prompted him to seek my company."

Alexius smiled as he answered: "It must be pleasing, then, for you to know that if you have there waited, panting for foes that dared not come, you are now about to be fully satisfied. Let me, however, give you a piece of advice which you may find of service: do not put yourself in the front, nor yet in the rear of the army; keep always in the middle. I have fought many times with Turks, and can assure you that is much the safer place."

Serious as the situation had been it was at no time as disquieting to the Emperor as that he now anticipated. The irritation of Godfrey and the anger of Raymond had been tempered with promises. But how should he deal with Bohemond, his old enemy, fearless as either of his colleagues and no less skilled in deception than himself?

He had not long to wait. Events were now crowding upon each other rapidly. The morning after the battle at Rodosto the fleet of Bohemond was emerging from the Hellespont. In the sea of Marmora, the Crusaders felt they were nearing the vast armies that had preceded them. All day long, as they sang of the Crusade and talked together joyously, they scanned the Greek coast for some trace. Later in the afternoon they entered the beautiful bay of Rodosto and were encircled by the lofty promontory of Combos. Louise was standing upon the deck of their ship and Tancred was pointing out the city they were approaching. The air was cold and brought the rich color to her cheeks and a sparkling light into her eyes. Never before had she seemed to him so beautiful.

"See," she exclaimed, "the forests of cypress over

"'SEE,' SHE EXPLAINED, * * 'THEY LOOK LIKE MEN IN CROWDS.'"

the hills beyond the city, and what are those moving masses among them? They seem to be separating from the trees. They look like men in crowds."

"They are men!" cried Tancred, and in a moment more Lacey came running up, shouting, "It is Raymond's army!"

Now the crowds were coming down the hill, through the city, and were already lining the shore; the Crusaders' crosses could be plainly seen, and as one voice a mighty shout went up from the ships:

"Raymond's army!"

Then cheer after cheer went up from every ship and transport, as the whole magnificent fleet rounded into the bay, and from the shore a still mightier welcome rang out its gladness on the air, nor till the sun went down, and darkness covered the waters and the cypress, did the joyous greeting end. Then, as the sounds ceased, and rose again and lingered softly, turning to Tancred, Louise exclaimed, sadly, "Alas! how grand would be the Crusade if we could escape the horror of Jerusalem, and see it end in this glad hour when God has touched with divine hand a hundred thousand hearts."

CHAPTER XI

BOHEMOND WON BY THE EMPEROR

BEAUTIFUL are the soft shadows of night; gentle their quiet influence. On the sloping plateau, just beyond the city of Rodosto, are thousands of camp fires from which a ruddy glow ascends as if to dim the stars that beam in all the radiant splendor of a December sky. They are the camp fires of the Crusaders who have returned from the shore of the bay after the glad welcome of Bohemond's army, and are sitting around the blazing embers, for the night is chill, talking joyously of the morrow.

Among them, and yet apart, a knight walks slowly back and forth, his face now lighted by the cheerful fire, and again lost in the shadow of the cypress. Around him his cloak is closely wrapped, though he does not feel the cold, for the warm blood rushes through his veins at the quicker beating of his heart. He is thinking of the letter, that all the long weeks since he left Touraine, he has carried within the folds of his tunic, and guarded as he would his life, and of her to whom he has promised to bear it. Twice only has he seen her, but he has never forgotten. Long after the others are sleeping he still walks with measured step, and not until the fires are burned low, and there is no sound in the

camp save the nervous tread of those who watch, does he lie beside his comrades, and shutting out from his gaze the stars, now brighter than before, seek repose in dreamy sleep.

Brightly the sun rose on the following morning, and brighter still were the faces that in the dawn gazed toward each other from shore to bay. There was a busy scene on board the ship of Bohemond. Early in the evening before, Adhemar had acquainted him with all that had occurred. As soon as the morning meal was served, taking Tancred and Lacey aside, he exclaimed: "Tancred, the news that Adhemar brings determines me to hasten forward to Constantinople. Godfrey and Raymond are there, and I know not what is happening that should make my presence necessary. Every hour may be of value, for I know Alexius well and can better than they discern his true intent. With you, Tancred, I leave the fleet. Remain here, where in these quiet waters its safety is assured, and when I shall send you word convey it to the Bythnian shore, but do not land till I shall join you. You, Lacey, will land your company of knights and ride with me; more we shall not need."

Without further words Lacey sought Louise, and telling the duty and trust assigned to him, held her soft hand a moment while she exclaimed: "I may not seek to turn you from a duty, but when you are gone, remember, ever, the danger that in that city will be always near you; danger not to yourself alone, but to her as well, whose love and prayers follow you."

"Nor will I forget," he replied.

Later in the day, after Bohemond and Lacey had left the vessel, Louise stood with Tancred upon the deck watching the company of knights still being landed. On the shore they could see Lacey, greeting them as

they led their horses from the transports and talking to the crowds that gathered around him from Raymond's army. Near by where Lacey stands they see a boat leaving the shore and moving rapidly toward them. In it are two men; one is rowing, and now the other seizes an oar and pushes it through the water as though impatient. Swiftly the boat nears their ship, and now Louise taps the deck nervously with her foot; something more than the keen air brings the pink into her cheeks; she grasps the arm of Tancred and draws him close to the rail as she exclaims: "My letter! My letter from Minette! It is le Bon and he is bringing it to me!" It was her woman's intuition and it was right, for a minute later the little boat touched the side of the vessel and Barri le Bon quickly climbed upon the deck. His face beams and his dark eyes sparkle as he approaches Louise, and, bowing with all the grace of a courteous knight, hands her the little packet that for two long months has been his treasure. She introduces him to Tancred, who since the beginning of her delight has not spoken.

With entire frankness ever characteristic of that perfect knight, le Bon exclaimed: "I should, indeed, have known this were the noble Tancred, for surely no other could be of such commanding presence."

If there was something that had brought for the moment to the face of Tancred a trace of hauteur, it was brushed away by the unquestioned honesty of this graceful compliment, and with equally pleasing courtesy he replied:

"And I am sure I look upon a knight who in the Crusade before us knows how to use his sword as nobly as he selects his words."

All the while Louise was holding the packet tightly

and reading over again the letters traced by the hand she knew so well, and now turning to the knight she exclaimed:

"And all this time I have not thanked you for the happiness you bring to me."

"If it pleases you, then I am debtor, for I am paid in France as well as here."

"And may I ask that you indulge me further while I retire to break the seal?"

"Surely, and I shall be glad if you find pleasing contents."

Louise now descended to the cabin, quickly tore apart the wrapper and hastily read the letter, the contents of which are already known to us. Then she sat thinking as she looked at the one addressed to Lacey.

Fate hangs on trifles. It might be of importance more than she knew. Pity he went so early; how happy it would make him on the road; perhaps he had already left the city, and if not how should she get it to him; where could she find a messenger? It needed but a word to Tancred, and yet the thought made her uneasy. Ah! le Bon; but le Bon must not know; not yet, there must be fuller time. Then she enclosed the letter in another wrapper, addressed it to Lacey with her own hand, secured it with her delicate seal, and returned quickly to the deck. Le Bon was relating to Tancred the story of the march from France, and was just finishing with a description of the treacherous attack of the Greeks. Looking up, at the step of Louise, he was about to speak, when approaching him in a manner that seemed to him delightfully expressive and yet not entirely free from a trace of anxiety, she exclaimed:

"Monsieur le Bon, do you know my cousin Lacey de Hauteville?"

"It has been my good fortune to meet him twice, Mademoiselle. It were a seeming boldness that I could expect you to remember my presence at the entertainment given by Count Renney when the fair Minette and yourself, released from serious study and convent duties, honored the nobles of Touraine, as well as those from other counties, by your presence."

"I do indeed remember."

"It was there I first met your cousin, nor can I forget his zeal expressed in words that seemed to me of inspiration. Only an hour ago we talked upon the shore while he but waited the landing of his company, for he rides today with Bohemond."

"It is for that I am concerned. I have something here, something he has forgotten, or, rather, I should say, that in his haste I did not give to him. Shall I be wrong to trespass further on your goodness, hoping you may yet find him before he leaves?"

"You add another measure to my happiness. It shall be safely delivered, though I ride all the way to Constantinople," exclaimed the knight, extending his hand.

"But I seem to be driving you away."

"You are giving me an excuse for coming again all the sooner," and feeling the warm touch of her soft hand as he received the little packet, le Bon bowed very low to conceal the blush that covered his manly face, and, with a quick salute to Tancred, disappeared over the side of the vessel. A moment later the little boat in which he came was moving swiftly toward the shore, his own arms pulling as strong as those of his companion.

And walking forward to the ship's bow, Louise and Tancred watch the boat which throws up jets of silvery foam as it rushes through the water. They see it touch

the shore and see le Bon walk rapidly toward a group of soldiers near where Lacey stood as the knights were landing. He seems to talk with them a moment, then walks faster toward the Crusaders' camp beyond, and they lose him among the crowds.

All the time she was talking with the knight and until they no longer saw him, Tancred had been silent, and now looking at him his eyes question her reproachfully. Kindly she answers:

"It was Minette's letter, Tancred."

"Could I not take it for you? Is it kind to me that favors which may win your gratitude should be asked of other hands?"

"Believe me, Tancred, I first thought of you; but would it be right to ask of you that with which your duty might conflict? Remember that upon you alone rests now the care and safety of us all."

"I am wrong; your words are always wise, and the clouds vanish before them as the sky clears in the sun's brighter rays, and now," he said with a smile, "I must leave you, for you have reminded me there are other matters to which I must attend."

Standing alone, Louise again looked earnestly toward the shore; then turning, her eyes wandered over the great fleet and over the sea beyond. She was thinking of pleasing pictures, such as appear in passing dreams, or are seen by the traveler, who, rushing along, catches here and there a glimpse of some scene whose beauty separates it from the broader landscape and prints it for the moment on his mind; perhaps stamps it on memory so that in some hour of reverie, or by some thought, persuaded, it may come again. And memory is presenting her again two such pictures; one is at Tours, where she first saw le Bon, and the other at

Touraine, the second meeting; but in both there are other settings, among which he has been seen dimly. Another picture is just passing. Does it dim the settings in the others; and will it grow to be more real than the touch of memory on an inward vision?

Half an hour before, and while Louise was reading Minette's letter, the little company of Bohemond had started toward Constantinople. They rode briskly, for it was a two days' journey and the morning was already well advanced. Now the road winds around some elevation that rises higher than the broad plateau, and again its course is along the very edge of the widening ridge, that on the water's side, descends almost abruptly to the sea, which far below washes gently against its rocky base. Bohemond and Lacey were riding in front, and they had already advanced nearly ten miles from the harbor at Rodosto when Lacey felt his arm seized by one of the knights who had suddenly urged his horse forward, and turning quickly, beheld a horseman coming down the long sloping hill they had left behind them many minutes before. His horse, sweeping forward with great leaps, was fast covering the distance between them, and as he approached nearer, the cross upon his breast proclaimed him a knight of the Crusade. The column halts and every knight sits watching the swiftly flying horseman as each moment the distance between them lessens. Now they see the red nostrils of the panting steed and break into a murmur of applause as they note the soldierly grace of the rider. Horse and knight seem as one, and well they may, for they love each other. A minute later, the hoofs of the noble animal thunder upon the hard road by their side, and now, drawing the rein with firm hand, and bowing in knightly fashion as he passes, the Crusader halts

in front of Bohemond and Lacey, salutes first the former and then Lacey with something less of military air, while the moisture from his foaming horse, which stands firmly with head erect and ears forward, striking the chill air envelops him in a cloud of steam.

Quickly grasping his extended hand and turning to Bohemond Lacey exclaimed:

"It is my good friend Barri le Bon."

Again bowing, the knight drew from his cloak the packet, saying as he handed it to Lacey: "It is to bring you this I have come. Mademoiselle Louise, your cousin, said it was something that in your haste you had forgotten, and its importance troubled her with anxious thoughts. I promised it should be placed in your hands, though I rode to Constantinople."

Lacey knew it was Minette's letter. The warm blood entered his cheek, and for a moment something in his throat refused the words he would speak; nor was it love for her alone whose gentle thoughts he held within his hand. Something more than friendship for the handsome knight flashed from his dark eyes as he replied:

"I am very grateful, Monsieur le Bon. You have done me a kindness, greater than you know. That which you have brought me is indeed important. I hope our next meeting may be not long delayed, and that it may bring opportunity for as good return. But what is this? There is blood upon your shoulder! You are wounded; have been in danger!"

"It is nothing, a mere scratch," returned the knight in some confusion. "In the hollow, just over the hill yonder, concealed by the trees whose branches meet, were two Greeks who bade me halt, a most unreasonable request, since they must have seen I was in haste,

and in passing them the lance of one but touched my neck, at which I feel ashamed, for there were but two and both Greeks."

"But will they not wait your return?" exclaimed Lacey with evident concern.

"They are indeed waiting, quietly enough though I think," replied le Bon.

"Ha!" cried Bohemond, "I understand. By my faith! but I would have given much to have witnessed it."

Lacey's face glowed as he again grasped the knight's hand, pressing it warmly as he said: "I trust, then, no further mischance will overtake your homeward journey. Bear to my cousin my full appreciation of her noble messenger. Till our next meeting then adieu; again I thank you."

Saluting Bohemond and Lacey, and shaking hands with many of the knights who had gathered around, delighted at his story of the encounter with the Greeks, le Bon turned his horse toward Rodosto, while the column of knights rode rapidly forward on their journey.

Late the following afternoon the stately columns of the imperial city rose before them; and arrived at the gates, Bohemond at once sought Godfrey and Raymond, who were as eagerly awaiting him. That very evening they held a long and earnest consultation. Learning all that had transpired, Bohemond was even more incensed than had been either of the others, and advised an immediate attack on the city. He urged the advantage, even the necessity of its being in the Crusaders' hands.

"Do you not see," he warmly exclaimed, "that to Aubrey alone we owe the whole spirit of the Crusade? Without his strong hand the preaching of Peter would

have been but an incident, as barren of results as were the arms of the rabble he led against the infidel months ago. Alexius is no less friendly to the Caliph than to the holy see. He looks with no favor upon a movement whose success, he well understands, will augment the power and influence of Rome. In the insult offered you, Godfrey, by the detention of Hugh; and in the more serious injury he had planned to overtake you, Raymond, there was an expression of his real sentiment toward the Crusade that cannot be misunderstood. In reparation what has he given you but words? Is one of his promises being fulfilled? Has he yet furnished a single transport? Are you not, yourselves, providing the support of your armies? Has not his attitude, at first threatening, now become vacillating, and is not his mood hesitating and uncertain, because he fears to aid and yet dares not resist? If our determination compel the means of transfer to the shore we seek, shall we be wise to leave behind us a secret foe ever ready to take advantage of such mischance as might attend our arms?"

The two chiefs had listened to Bohemond with serious attention, and turning to Raymond, Godfrey replied with no little spirit:

"I am much impressed with what our brother of Taranto has said. It is true we have both felt the unfriendly touch of the Emperor in such as he dared, and if with him we have exchanged friendly conditions they are by him forgotten, while he artfully weighs our patience. Why sit we waiting? Our powerful arms united may accomplish what they will, and the temper of all the chiefs and nobles would hail with enthusiasm, a plan to sweep aside an enemy to the Crusade. Whatever promise has been made is doubly forfeited by the

Emperor, and if it please you both, let us secure this city that its strength may not be feared while we press forward in our holy cause."

Raymond sat calmly listening. Upon his noble countenance there was no emotion visible save that of loyal confidence in the cause of Him, who, stronger than the Emperor or themselves, measured them both.

As Godfrey ceased speaking he answered: "Do each of you as your conscience dictates; as for me, I am here for no other undertaking. I was angered at the treachery of the Emperor and am impatient at the insincerity of his promises; but in the one my Crusaders have suffered little harm, and as for the other, I will myself find the means to transport my army across the water that now separates us from the infidel. In His holy cause God will protect us from any danger we may leave behind."

Bohemond tapped the ground nervously with his foot while Raymond was speaking, but before he could reply Godfrey exclaimed:

"We recognize, Raymond, the Christian grace that underlies your words, but is it possible we can remain here long, inactive, with causes of irritation and ill will constantly arising between ourselves and the Emperor without sooner or later coming to blows? Can we restrain the nobles, many of whom believe their authority quite equal to our own?"

Full of religious zeal as either of the two chiefs before him, it was not with Bohemond the one absorbing thought. With the Crusade were other ambitions, for he was Norman; and, shrewder than they, he now added:

"Truly, indeed, are we all here for the one purpose; nor do I know that God has inspired one more fully than He has each of the thousands of noble chiefs, who

have left their homes with but a single Christian desire in their hearts. What we are considering is not a conquest in which devotion to the Crusade has no part, but rather what measure were wise to insure the safety of our expedition, the swift execution of its design and the certainty of its successful result, and," turning to Godfrey, "the words of your grace are worthy our further thought, but the night is already advanced, our obligations will not permit us to pass lightly upon a matter so serious. If it pleases you I will retire, that after each has reasoned with himself we may take further counsel."

Rising courteously, as he ceased speaking, Bohemond withdrew. As he stepped outside, his quick ear caught the sound of footsteps as though suddenly retreating. The moon was full, and in the light, he fancied he saw a shadow which vanished before defined by his suspicious glance. He paused a moment, but saw nothing save the tents of the Crusaders, and at safe intervals guards, who, walking back and forth, watched. Near him was one taller than the others. Surely were aught there of ill intent he must have seen. 'Twas but fancy, he thought, as he again looked at the Crusader, who had approached nearer. His tread was softer and his bearing different from the soldier whose duty requires such service. He was lightly armed, too, and his sword, of costly make, flashed in the bright moonlight. The accustomed eye of Bohemond noted everything, and he wondered. Then turning as he heard steps, that were no longer uncertain, he saw a knight approaching. Instinctively his hand rested upon his sword, and was as quickly withdrawn, as he recognized Lacey, who, advancing rapidly, exclaimed in a low voice:

"Pardon me, I was anxious and have been waiting

near should you have need of me, for I like not the air about the Emperor's walls."

"And were you then standing near?" asked Bohemond.

"Just in the shadow of the tree yonder."

It could not have been him, thought the Duke. "And did you hear nothing, see nothing?" he again asked.

"Nothing, save this sea of tents, the watchers on duty, and these gloomy walls; nothing, not a sound."

Many days passed without further results. Raymond would not be moved from the sole object to which he said he had devoted his life and his fortune, and without his aid Godfrey was unwilling to engage so powerful an opponent. Bohemond was in a mood to quarrel with them both, when an emissary from the Emperor invited his presence. Without hesitation he repaired to the imperial palace and was warmly greeted by Alexius, who chided him pleasantly for being so long at his city without being seen at court.

"I did not know, until I was honored by your majesty's request, my presence would be welcomed," replied Bohemond, determined to humor his mood, well knowing it concealed a motive.

"Your grace would scarcely have waited an invitation, after Durazzo, had you been so near," exclaimed Alexius, pleased at his own wit.

Bohemond smiled as he answered: "Better then to have waited, till the good nature expressed in your majesty's words, confuses me by touching upon my former boldness."

"It were pleasantly said," continued Alexius, "and all the more so that we know your valor equals the courtesy of your words; but seriously, we do complain that you came not to us in friendly greeting, as Chris-

tian princes should, but that, unrested even from your journey, you advised Raymond and Godfrey, in speech little to our own credit, to do that we should much deplore."

An accomplished courtier, artful as the Emperor, Bohemond, though startled, did not manifest by the slightest movement that the meaning of the words was understood. Beyond a slight elevation of his eyebrows, as if questioning the thought conveyed, not an expression on his face indicated to Alexius what was passing within, as he calmly asked:

"And how comes such knowledge to your majesty?"

"A thousand eyes and ears ever bring to our secret knowledge such intelligence as may give us concern to know," answered the Emperor.

"The humblest of your subjects," returned the Duke, "has a pair of ears and two eyes; more than these may oft deceive your majesty."

"Excellently answered! All your words increase my desire for your more friendly favor. Be tonight at our royal banquet, and over the meat and wine, and in the good cheer that follows let us know each other better."

"So I was right," muttered Bohemond softly, as he returned from the Emperor's presence. "It was not fancy; it was the step of his spy I heard and his shadow I saw the night I urged Godfrey and Raymond against Alexius. By my faith! the dog must have vanished into the earth. 'Twas a dangerous game, but the Emperor played it well; and yet, methinks he's but ill satisfied. I knew he had a motive; but it's not all told. Let him play the game out. Yes; I will be there, and if nothing comes of it to my liking, matters will at least be no worse than they are. Ah! is it you, Lacey? Ever watchful! I was so busy with my thoughts I did not

know I had covered half the distance from the royal gardens. Go take some rest, for I shall have need of you tonight, and there may be danger in it."

The hour was still early when darkness gently spread its first mantle over the Crusaders' tents, for the December days are short.

"The Emperor has invited me to his banquet tonight, and we will not keep his royal table waiting," exclaimed Bohemond, as Lacey appeared dressed in light armor, "and in good truth," he continued, "I am rather curious to know if there be a purpose in it. Have you one in your company, of strong and ready arm, who loves danger better than his sleep?"

"I have," replied Lacey; L'Enfans, a merry fellow, whose wit is sharp as his sword. You may have noticed him."

"A very Hercules; he is the man we want. With him, you will guard the imperial grounds while I am with the Emperor; keep well within the shadow of the gardens, but be within hearing, and should I call loudly, or if there be sudden outcry, rush in. Three such men as we should not fear the courtiers of Alexius, though they be as many score."

Delighted at the prospect of a night of mystery and possible strife, L'Enfans was soon ready. It was some distance to the palace, and the night had so far advanced when the three arrived, that Lacey and L'Enfans were unnoticed as Bohemond, who, on approaching the gardens, had walked some distance in advance, entered the royal halls. The palace of Alexius consisted of numerous buildings of exquisite architecture within and surrounded by beautiful gardens. During the summer, and even to the very edge of winter, it was a magnificent park of palaces, of flowering plants and shading foliage.

The banquet room was already lighted, and as Lacey and L'Enfans concealed themselves under the overhanging branches of the trees that, though stripped of their richer foliage, cast a deeper shadow, they could see the guests arriving and count their numbers. Among them were two, who, coming from different ways, met near them and looking cautiously around, questioned each other in low voice and then disappeared within an entrance where the lights were dimmer. Something about the taller of them attracted Lacey; something that brought to his mind a half remembered presence, and, stepping forward, he tried to see his face but could not. Perhaps, he thought, 'twas but the incident that seemed not in accord with the scene of merriment within; and yet he felt uneasy and listened for some sign.

Of all the guests present at the merry feast, none equaled Bohemond in entertaining grace. Mirth, wit and dignity were ever balanced in his conversation, and the Emperor was all the more anxious for his friendship, that his unruffled manner showed no concern at the words that had been spoken but a few hours before. As the banquet ended and the guests arose to depart, Alexius took his arm and drawing him aside exclaimed:

"Alas that Godfrey and Raymond are such gloomy owls! Thou art a skillful general, and a merry companion withal. I want thy friendship. It were better for both. Guard my interests as thou goest forward on this Crusade, which, in truth, I like not too well, and all thou wilt ask shall be thine. Give me thy answer not now, but tomorrow, for the hour is late. I will myself guide thee another way as thou art departing." With these words he led Bohemond to his treasure vaults and showed him a chest of gold.

Not so rich as Raymond, who was reputed to be the wealthiest noble in France, Bohemond was surprised into a manifestation of greedy desire.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "here is the wherewith to conquer kingdoms."

"Even so; it is thine," replied the Emperor; "do not forget thy answer tomorrow."

Among the last to depart were the two whose suspicious actions had attracted Lacey's attention. Outside the banquet hall they stopped a moment, conversing low as before; then separating, one turned southward toward the Propontis, while the other, who had appeared to Lacey as taller, walked slowly past the two watchers in the direction of the Crusaders' camp. His face was so muffled that only the upper part was visible. Stepping forward quickly, to obtain a better view, Lacey attracted his attention. He stopped, looked full at the young knight, and with a sudden start, placed his hand on his sword; then, as quickly dropping it, passed on. At the same moment Bohemond appeared. Nothing escaped his eye; and watching the retreating figure, he exclaimed in low, surprised tones, as if musing:

"By my faith! it is very like him!" Then noticing Lacey's questioning look, he continued: "I know not why there should be other Crusaders here, and yet yon fellow is very like the guard I saw at Raymond's tent."

"And can we not follow him?" cried L'Enfans. "By all the saints! but he touched his weapon as if he knew how a good blade should be handled. Give me your leave and I will make him draw it, at least till I uncover his face, which I doubt not is ugly enough."

"No, no!" laughed Bohemond. "We will ruffle nothing tonight. Doubt not, good L'Enfans, that I love

thy humor, and will see that thou shalt soon have plenty of work to thy liking, to warm thy blood, which I fear has been somewhat chilled in the service thou hast done me tonight."

Matters were thus shaping themselves to the Emperor's liking. Bohemond was the one whom, most of all, he feared. His bold move, costly though it was, had converted, for the time at least, an ambitious enemy, artful as himself, into a friend. Why should he not therefore profit, with the system of espionage he had long since established in many of the cities held by the Turks with those of his former subjects, by such victories as the Crusaders should win? There was much to be accomplished, however, before the latter could continue their advance. Transports must be provided, and it was important a positive agreement should be entered into between himself and the chiefs.

The impatience of the latter was shared by every one in those three great armies enlisted under the banner of the cross, and by none more than the knight, le Bon, who had returned to Rodosto, after his hasty ride to overtake Lacey, full of pleasing thoughts.

It was late in the afternoon when he arrived, but as soon as he had cared for the noble animal he rode, he proceeded at once to the bay, and securing a boat, was quickly transferred again to the vessel where he knew Louise was waiting. She was in the cabin with her mother and others of her sex, wives and relatives of the nobles and knights of Bohemond's court, and, rising at once to greet him, was about to speak when he exclaimed:

"I fear I have intruded; pardon me; but I should scarcely have thought my duty completed until you knew the message to Lacey was delivered."

With these words he was about to retire, when Louise replied: "But you cannot go until I thank you, and gratify the desire of my friends to know a knight whose generous impulse hesitates not at seeming impossibilities."

"And indeed you would hardly have been forgiven had you done otherwise," they answered, as the handsome young knight was presented to each.

"Did you, then, ride far before you overtook them?" said Louise.

"About ten miles; they had an hour's start and were proceeding rapidly."

"Twenty miles since you were here this morning! and you did it to oblige me."

"For the same purpose I should like to do something many times more difficult."

Louise blushed. It could not have been displeasure, for her eyes, drooping a moment, looked again kindly into his own as he continued:

"With your permission, then, I will return, for there are duties to which I should attend before the night advances."

"But you will come again, and soon?"

"If I have your permission."

"Let it be soon, then, that you may entertain us the oftener."

Many were the inviting glances cast toward the young knight as he disappeared over the ship's side, but he saw only the face of Louise while his boat sped toward the shore.

Barri le Bon was one of the few who perfectly typified the ideal knight of the twelfth century, such as was described by Deschamps two hundred years later:

"Be meek of heart; work day by day;
Tread ever tread the knightly way;
Make lawful war; long travel dare;
Tourney and Joust for lady fair;
To everlasting honor cling,
That none the barbs of blame may fling;
Be ever least in self's own sight;
This is the rule for the gallant knight."

Louise was not one whose softer emotions were likely to yield to a handsome face or a neatly expressed compliment. Hers was a nature that required something more substantial than sentiment unsupported by genuine worth. In le Bon she could not fail to recognize something more than outward grace or strength of arm; something within, whose presence dominates the man, and as the evening wore away after his departure she felt, that, scarcely knowing what, she missed something.

A week later a messenger arrived from Bohemond with advice to Tancred of affairs at the Emperor's capital. He brought also, for Louise, a note from Lacey, thanking her for Minette's letter and expressing in generous words his admiration for le Bon. One sentence, "I hope the wound he received on the way was not serious," she had read many times and wondered. So he had been wounded, had been injured in a service for her, and had never spoken of it. She did not even know how seriously or in what danger he had been; and she sat thinking.

The following day, when he again visited the ship, Barri le Bon thought she looked not so kindly as her eyes met his own. He was mistaken. She was reading him, and when she told him she had heard from Lacey, and then in her sweet womanly way asked about his wound, he blushed and would have denied it, but that

her reproachful eyes forbade. And she made him tell her every detail of his encounter with the Greeks; then shivered a little, and wondered more, as she looked at this man with face and eye kind as a woman's, and yet a hero. Not to admire such fearless loyalty she would be less than woman, and still she wished the Greeks were living.

Her eyes grew softer as she said: "I thank you none the less that I reproach myself. It was for me you met dangers I thought not of, and had mishap befallen you, I should have been the cause; nor can I forget the poor Greeks. Who knows what hearts, waiting, do not yet know they will come no more?"

"No mishap," answered the knight, "can overtake him who hesitates not in duty. Death even to such is not an evil, since it comes at the hour appointed to all men. Happy is he who meets it with loyal heart. As for the Greeks, they were but brigands."

Louise looked at him with surprise, as she replied: "I do not understand such words from one whose manner seems so gentle. Steadfast to duty is a noble sentiment; but is there nothing in all these scenes of strife that oppresses you; nothing that ill fits the charity and patience of Him in whose service knighthood hath honor? Do not think I am insensible to the grand thought you have expressed, that death is no evil to him who yields his life to duty; but what is duty? Is it to shed lightly the blood of others, or place one's own in peril from trifling cause? Nor would I seem ungrateful, I do not mean that. It was very kind of you. I am sorry you were hurt."

"It was nothing," returned the knight; "a dozen such trifles were more than paid in your thanks, though I would deserve them better. Your words, even

chiding, I have treasured. They will come to me on the battle field and in every scene of strife, for strife must be, though tempered by such better influence as comes from hearts like yours. Is it not through constant human struggle that every good has come? Peace follows war, and is its result. Justice ever wields a sword. Out of pain and suffering and death, springs newer, better and broader life. Such is universal law. Our own Crusade is a movement of God and justice, a movement which, recovering the Holy City and Sepulchre, will lift from the Eastern world the blighting mantle of infidelity."

"I hate the Crusade."

There was a moment's silence. A pained look rested upon the face of le Bon, Louise did not notice. Her thoughts were far away. Then he answered:

"But not the Crusaders? Your cousin Lacey, and Tancred; your uncle Bohemond, Raymond and Godfrey, and the thousands of other knights, all moved by the same zeal, all loyal to the same faith, the faith that exalts France, all honored by hearts as warm as your own?"

"No, not them; nor could I do such wrong to you. It is the Crusade itself. On yon hillside, and in this great fleet, whose ships cover the still bay, are thousands, countless as the leaves that have fallen in the cold touch of winter, who will wound and slay and suffer and die on the soil and in the cities where a loving Savior first rocked the cradle of peace. And for what? A shadow! The flaming sword of France demands the Holy Sepulchre. Is it worth one Christian life? Is it necessary to the spirit of our noble faith, or is it sought by human passion? Think you this was the Christianity preached by Peter to the converts in the

groves at Rome, or of those who suffered at Lyons?"

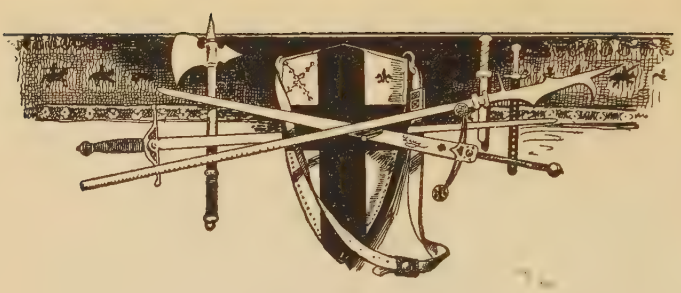
The countenance of le Bon was a study. Serious at first; then looking at and yet seemingly beyond the earnest speaker, his eyes became radiant, as thoughts, startling as her own, flashed through his soul.

"And yet," he replied, "it is out of the very gentleness of Peter, and the martyrs at Lyons the Crusade has come. Those were the days of the seed and the bud. After them, the tender plant and the blossom, and then the fruit and the harvest. From Rome and Lyons, Christianity covered France. Why? Because, rude as its people then were, France was to be the builder. Against it Barbarism struggled and yielded, but left its traces, and our Christianity became a leaven, which, working, brought into bold relief these traces and contrasts. There are yet brutal and ruffianly deeds we would forget, and there are saintly acts of Christian grace and love and knightly honor. And, out of the working of this leaven, began the world's growth, the real civilization; for that of Greece and Pagan Rome was dying. The symbol and picture of Egypt tell of a past that left no seed, and to the poetry of Greece one listens in vain for the love that builds. Pagan wisdom was but the cold philosophy of stoics, and from it we turn, dazed, hopeless, to the faith, the warm heart of Christianity and the new civilization; the movement which shall encircle and hold the earth within the power of its love. But love chastens and punishes the evil doer, even though its instruments suffer. We, unto whose humanity the progress of the work, begun by divine hands, has been entrusted, have duties, stern too as well as gentle. Infidel hands must no longer hold that which symbolized our faith even before France had caught the rays of its sunlight. The Crusade is not an

impulse. It has gathered its tremendous force, not from the enthusiasm of Peter or the eloquence of Aubrey, but from an inspiration France could not resist. Duty does not end here, nor conflict. Every form of evil and error that bars the progress of the new civilization, that is rising from this leaven of Christianity, must yield or be destroyed. We cannot escape the pain and the suffering and the death, through which the world is moving to universal peace."

Louise did not answer. Motionless she gazed upon the speaker. Who was this man, this knight, upon whose glowing face and earnest, sparkling eye there seemed to rest a living soul, whose thought it seemed for the moment had so far distanced her own? Then Tancred, who had just arrived from the shore, appeared, and while the two men greeted each other, she looked at him and wondered why he had never so answered her. He was taller than le Bon, and she had thought no knight appeared more noble. She was trying to think of him as he wished. Looking again at le Bon she thought: "If Tancred were like him." Then she exclaimed:

"I fear I am forgetting our hospitality, and that there are others waiting to see you. Let us seek them, for we have yet a little time before the hour for dinner."



CHAPTER XII

DEATH OF COUNT LUIS

VERY slowly the winter days had passed with Minette. Once only had she heard from Louise, but it was after the latter had received from le Bon her first letter. It had given her new confidence, and increased her delight, that Louise had described the union of the fleet with Raymond's army at Rodosto, the joy of the Crusaders, the meeting with the knight, and the departure of Lacey with Bohemond. Gentle as the tender violet that would fain hide itself beneath the beauty of the bolder rose, no heart in all that vast multitude that waited on the hills about Rodosto was braver than hers, none more devoted, none more loyal to the cause which, gathering within its bosom her loved ones, had become every day more sacred.

And now there was coming to her a surprise that was to bring a greater joy. It was early in March and she was sitting in the room that looked out upon the road over which Lacey had departed, the room that had become so dear to her. She was looking at the arbor, now clothed with scant covering of leafless vine, over which the dry branches, spreading, touched each other kindly as the sunlight from the western sky smiled upon

them. And hope smiled upon her as the sunlight did upon the leafless vines and branches. So quietly, that she felt rather than saw his presence, her father entered. His face, always kind, was more serious than usual.

"Minette," he exclaimed in a low voice, and taking her hand within his own, as he sat down by her, "a messenger has just arrived bringing us news from the Crusade, some of which is very sad."

Instantly Minette was breathless with attention. Her heart beat quickly and her dark eyes opened wider as she listened.

"The army of Peter," he continued, "is believed to have been almost entirely destroyed. Indeed, as yet it is not known that any still live to tell the dreadful story. What folly that their feverish haste should invite such ruin! Godfrey and Raymond, and the great fleet of Bohemond as well, have been artfully delayed at Constantinople by the Emperor, whose craft has fortified the infidel, or France has given birth to traitors. Within this very month God will begin to carve the way over which these heroes shall vindicate His glory, but to Jerusalem the road will be no knight's tournament, and sore will be the need of every arm that France can send. I have been wrong. The noble Raymond tarried not; and yet in former days not even he touched lance till he had asked, where is Touraine? Faith, conscience, honor, all bid me go; and in the resolution that has come there would be peace and even deeper joy, except they hesitate before my anxious thought for you, in whose gentleness is all that is left to me of the joy that clings to memories of the past."

The face of Minette looked divinely beautiful in the soft twilight, whose shadows were gathering about the

chateau, as she rose and, placing her soft hand upon the forehead of the Count, replied:

"Next to you I love the Crusade; with you all my heart will be there. Take me with you, father."

"Ah, Minette! you are my own child, but you are a tender flower."

"I am stronger than you think, and with you I shall fear nothing. I shall not be useless. Raymond's wife is little older than I; and Louise is there, and Lacey—I mean Monsieur de Hauteville. You remember him. I have dreamed of entering Jerusalem; and then if aught happened you, which God forbid, I should be with you to heal your wounds with love and gentle care."

"Say no more," answered the Count, tenderly kissing her, "we go together."

"When shall we start, father?"

"It may be many weeks, perhaps not till May; a hundred or more of those who serve me in the county have long been inspired by the same zeal and will go with me. There is much to do, and I must engage a vessel, for we shall sail to Constantinople."

The shadows deepened and night came, but father and daughter heeded not the darkness in that hour, happiest the Count had known for years; and when the servant came with lights, and Minette was alone, with her father's parting kiss upon her cheek, she sat, scarce moving, holding, within her heart, the ecstasy of the morrow; then wooing sleep, sweet visions of happy scenes floated, ever woven in new fancies, that sleep, in its final peace and rest, gathered into dreams.

There were busy scenes at Touraine in the days and weeks that followed, and in the consultations at the chateau, the plans that were formed, the work of preparing arms and clothing, and the tournaments of the

younger knights, the impatience of Minette counted the days, and watched the springing buds, that under the warmer sun, were clothing the park again in green. Now that all unexpected, this great happiness had come to her, that she was really going, would be with Louise, near Lacey, perhaps might often see him, fear and dread of Guibert came upon her stronger than before, for his threat had never once been forgotten.

More than a year had passed since the ill-fated multitude, led by Peter, sang as they journeyed, without plan or method, like a ship unguided by compass or rudder, within the power of a current bearing it to a vortex of inevitable ruin. May had come again with its flowers and its song birds whose beauty and music told of the summer, which doubtful, waited in the chill shadow. And now everything was in readiness for the departure of the little company, that, full of zeal as those who had gone before, was to bear the crosses and the colors of Touraine into the Crusade. Nothing had been done in haste and nothing forgotten. The evening before they were to leave, the Count sat with Minette in the same room, almost in the same spot, where, six weeks before, in the story of his resolve and her answer, each had found a new confidence, a new affection. He had come to tell her all his plans.

"Tomorrow," he said, "we shall leave by the river for Nantes. There I have engaged two ships on which we shall sail direct for Constantinople, stopping at as few places as may be necessary. We shall remain there only long enough to obtain some word as to the route and whereabouts of the armies; then cross the waters and trust the rest to God." He then added such final instructions as the possibility of accident to himself seemed to require, closing with these words: "To have you with

me, in this that we are undertaking for God's greater glory, is a joy to my heart. I hope I am not doing wrong. You are all I have. Your father has borne an honorable name. Should a great misfortune come to you, trust in God and have no fear. Should I live and we return, after Jerusalem is ours, remember I have promised and you are betrothed to Guibert. Should there be some day, when heavier blows are given, and I come not from the battle, then your promise and your duty rests with God alone."

Both had risen, for it was late, and as the Count kissed her good night a tear dropped upon the face that rested on his shoulder. Sad, but happy, happy evening!

Better that the world within knows not of the world without. Even while those last words of love were being said at the old chateau, on that very evening so full of thoughts on which would hang future memories, a different scene was passing at Parthenay. Since the departure of Guibert six months before, Count Luis had visited Touraine but once. His old friend would not leave on so serious an undertaking without sending a messenger inviting him to share the peril and the glory as in their younger days.

It was on that occasion he had ridden over to Touraine, hoping to dissuade Count Renney from an enterprise which had already cost him so much. It was a repetition of the old argument, and while they parted with the old time affection, Count Luis felt that another link had been severed in the chain which had bound their lives in that friendship born out of the martial glory of the past.

His hair had grown whiter, and the months since Guibert had ridden away from Parthenay with such seeming indifference to his wishes, weighed as years. It was

late in the afternoon of that day on the evening of which such quiet peace had come to Minette in the conversation of her father, that a messenger brought to Count Louis a letter. The old man was sitting in a room from which had disappeared the richer decorations of former years. It looked out upon the road over which Guibert had departed; out upon the little cemetery just beyond; out upon the sunlight, too. In the large open fireplace a few logs were blazing, for the day was chill, even though forest and garden were catching the timid advances of spring. Slowly he broke the seal, and opening the letter, read it in a dazed way, as though its words conveyed at first no meaning; then beginning again, he tried to read more carefully. He could see the letters and the words following each other, but they conveyed no intelligence. His mind seemed a blank, and he passed his hand over his forehead. "Strange," he muttered. Then nearer the light, he read it the third time, and without moving, gazing out into the sunlight, he began to tear it piece by piece, and moving unsteadily to the great fireplace, dropped them all upon the red logs and watched them burn. The air caught the ashy cinders and whirled them one by one up the blackened chimney. He did not know why he smiled when all had disappeared. Something like a weight was pressing upon his head. He called a servant and asked for wine. Then he sat down and tried to think, but upon his head the weight pressed heavier. The wine was brought and he drank a little of it. The blood that seemed to be filling up his heart, moved again into the arteries, very slowly, but, for the moment, he felt relieved, and drank more and tried to remember. He saw the sun going down behind the little cemetery, and could not understand why it im-

pressed him strangely; then came the twilight shadows and the darkness. A servant came with lights and noticing something strange in his looks, paused and asked if he would have the evening meal served. Without speaking, the Count motioned him away. Then he drank a little more of the wine. Thoughts came, but the chain seemed tangled; bits of memory were strangely mixed. Guibert! Minette; when will the bells ring for the wedding? Ah! the letter! He felt sleepy, and covering his head with a silken kerchief, rested it upon the back of the great easy chair on which he sat. Merrily burned the fire, and the flames danced as the laughing sparks were lapped up into the great chimney. The hours pass, and there are only the red coals over which a blue light is flickering. The ends of the silken covering have fallen over the Count's face, but he does not move. The light has burned out. The coals in the fireplace are no longer red, and the room is in darkness. Then a soft light timidly enters the eastern windows, and, growing bolder, fills the room, chasing the shadows from the corners; and the rosy sun, rising above the trees in the park outside, looks in smiling, its mellow rays resting upon that still figure that, unheeding, has worn out the long hours of night. A bird, playing with its mate in the brisk morning air, strikes against the window, and resting upon the sill, looks in as though it would enter. A servant, the one who had brought the light, anxious, raps upon the door. Hearing no answer, he opens it, and sees the Count still sitting in the chair. He starts towards him, then pauses in sudden fear and calls the maid, who is singing as she does her morning's work in the halls. Together they walk slowly and with quiet steps, and reaching the Count, lift the kerchief from his face. One moment they can hear the loud beating of each other's

hearts, but their hands are struck with sudden cold. Then, speechless, they lift him tenderly and carry him to the couch; and moving noiselessly, they darken the windows, and spreading the silken covering again over his face, they leave the room, closing the door almost without breathing, as if fearing he might awake.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CONFLICT IN THE WINE ROOM

THE affairs of the Crusaders were moving slowly at the Eastern capital. A few days after the Emperor's banquet an understanding was reached between himself and Bohemond, and Alexius drew up an agreement whereby the Crusaders consented that, "if with God's help there were taken any of the cities which had at one time belonged to the Greek empire all along the march up to Syria, the same should be restored to the Emperor, together with all the territory adjacent, and that the booty and spoils of war should be given up to the Crusaders for their valor and expense."

For many days Godfrey and Raymond resisted this agreement, contending it was no part of their holy mission to make conquests for the Emperor. Bohemond, however, influenced perhaps as much by his irritation at the previous obstinacy of his colleagues as he was by the magnificent gift of Alexius, supported the latter so warmly that the covenant was signed by the three chiefs, and the Emperor, with some mental reservations, agreed to lend his favor to the enterprise.

The preparation of necessary transports and supplies, and the transferring of these enormous armies into the land of the infidel was a matter of no small moment, and the winter months were rapidly wearing away. In the meantime the knights and soldiers passed the days in

such manner as they could. Discipline among large bodies of men, without a single leader of supreme authority, is always difficult. Each knight and almost every soldier felt that his was an individual mission. Rodosto was not so far away, and large bodies of knights from Bohemond's and Raymond's armies were constantly moving to and from the city, which was at all hours filled with Crusaders who lined the streets and frequented the places of public resort. Between them and the Greeks there was little good feeling. The Greeks resented the self-asserted superiority of the Crusaders and were ever ready to return as hearty blows as were too frequently given over the wine cup. Street fights, in which swords were drawn, were of frequent occurrence, and very often miniature battles, in which blood flowed freely, were ended only on the arrival of the Emperor's guards.

All the knights, with their horses, and nearly all the soldiers of Bohemond's army, had been landed upon the hills at the extremity of the little city of Rodosto, that they might have better opportunity for exercise. Le Bon had become a frequent and ever welcome visitor at the ship of Tancred, and Louise could not deny to herself that she was becoming strangely attracted by his earnest thought and unity of purpose, from which he would not be diverted. She was, loyally as she thought, trying to persuade her heart into an attachment for Tancred, but try as she would she could not help contrasting the glamour of his presence with the sterling manhood of le Bon. She surprised herself one day in the thought that she was irritated because the knight had stayed away from the ship longer than usual, and it surprised her the more that she felt happier when he came again. Often as his eyes had told the story, he had never

spoken of his love, and brave as were his words when duty was in the balance, he could not, looking into her eyes, say those little words; "I love you." Woman-like, when he was gone, she resented it a little; and yet had he spoken then, it would have pained her. Little did she then know the anguish that was coming to her out of that unspoken love.

It was early in February that Lacey returned for a brief visit. Himself and le Bon were much alike. Both were young men of lofty sentiment; both were devoted to the Crusade, and it was but natural that a sincere friendship should result from their previous acquaintance. Perhaps le Bon loved Lacey none the less that he was cousin to Louise. He had not yet visited Constantinople, although a few years before, in company with others from the court of Philip, he had been received by Alexius and had spent several weeks at the Eastern capital, and when Lacey returned he gladly accepted his invitation to accompany him and view the army of Godfrey and the preparations that were being made for the advance of the Crusade. The ride was without adventure and concluded the evening of the second day, when le Bon was again introduced to Bohemond, who shook his hand all the more heartily that he remembered the incident of the two Greeks.

The enthusiasm of both knights was of the most exalted character, and when, together, they visited Godfrey's army, many of whose nobles and knights were known to le Bon, they felt as brothers.

They were sitting together one morning in Lacey's quarters when the knight, L'Enfans, passed by on his way into the city.

"There," remarked Lacey, "is a peculiar character; a brave soldier, loyal friend, an enthusiast scarcely know-

ing why, handles the sword and lance like a master, strong as he is skillful, loves a brawl or a fight better than his wine, and yet devoted to duty and with a heart kind as a woman and faithful to those he loves. He will spend the day in such amusement and with whatever companions he may find in some drinking place, nor will he be over particular as to its character."

"Truly," laughed le Bon, "a better man for a friend than an enemy."

L'Enfans, meanwhile, all unconscious of the remarks of his observers, proceeded leisurely along over the broad street that led from one of the town gates to those in the ancient Theodosian wall, walking a little faster past the cathedrals, about which the solemn air was not quite to his liking; then pausing to view the great cisterns from which the city was supplied with water, and finally reaching the Contoscalium, where the transports, building all along the shore of the Propontis, were being towed. The sun was already well past the meridian, when, feeling hungry, he entered one of the numerous places of public resort. It mattered little to him, that, in a locality frequented by sailors and fishermen and those who live one scarcely knows how, it was of questionable character; and, ordering a bottle of wine and a dinner of bread and fish, he was soon enjoying himself as heartily as if at the Emperor's banquet, and with very much less concern.

Merry companions came and went, and he chatted and played at games with them, while women entertained, as was the custom, with dancing, and crude song, gathering here and there a few coins, and sometimes sharing the wine. The hours passed and just a shade of gloom settling over the room, none too well lighted at best, told that the sun had disappeared behind the west-

ern gates, and that night was approaching. Still the Crusader sat, the bottle on the little table before him not yet quite emptied of its red wine. He was thinking of France, and of a bright, rosy face that, rude as he appeared, loved to nestle within the sunshine of his great heart.

The morning had passed very pleasantly with the young knights Lacey and le Bon. They talked of France and Taranto, and of the Crusade and the honors they hoped to win. Early in the afternoon Lacey proposed they should visit the city and see the preparations that were being made for their departure. Taking the street over which L'Enfans had passed a few hours before, they left it, after proceeding a short distance, for one farther north, leading past the imperial palaces and homes of the wealthier nobles, stopping now and then to admire the arcades, the bazaars and the magnificent baths, until finally, outside the old wall of Constantine, they stood on the shore of the Bosporus, and without speaking, gazed long and wistfully across the narrow waters, little thinking that on that very spot in future years there would rise the gilded splendor of the Seraglio.

Full of earnest thought they scarcely noticed how the hours had sped until warned that the sun was no longer reflected upon the water, and turning southward, they soon reached the Propontis, where the transports were building. It was a scene that impressed them both, and they lingered until the boats farthest away began to be obscured in the darkness that was drawing its shadows around them. Still keeping near the water as they started to return, that they might view the harbor before the vessels already completed were hidden by the darkness, they walked slowly along, for the streets were nar-

row and there were many passing. Here and there were Crusaders who had lingered over their wine, and there were those of other nations, and sailors who had but just landed and were seeking the pleasures of the city; and gaunt faces that looked at them hungrily; strange figures, too, that kept in the darker shadows, and others upon whose countenances crime was stamped. There were strange sounds, too. Drunken revelers in the distance passing with boisterous song; the plash of oars and the merry call of the boatmen upon the water; laughter and song bursting from the doors of the drinking places as they open to let in some new-comer, while far away the air is tremulous with soft music from the Church of the Holy Apostle; and from the shadows of a house that is built on the water's edge there is something like whispers as they pass; perhaps it is the wind.

It is the house with the creaky steps, the house which two months before we saw Guibert enter; but the boat then close to its side is no longer there. In its shadow are figures crouching closely to the walls. There are others, too, creeping softly behind the young knights, who, passing the house, are in front of the harbor. They stop, and in the gloom try to count the boats. Now, in those passing moments, the crouching figures have left the darker shadow of the house and are slowly approaching them with steps light as the creeping tiger. In the hand of the foremost is a long knife; the others have swords whose blades glitter even in the sullen gloom. Behind them all is a tall figure whose face is partly concealed in the loose folds of a silken hood. He motions them forward.

In earnest conversation and pointing to the boats, the knights hear nothing. The long knife is raised high and

the body of him whose hand clasps it is already bending forward to give force to the blow he aims at Lacey. Is it chance or some unknown influence, that, reaching the subtle brain, strangely warns of sudden peril? Why he turned about le Bon never knew. One glance of horror, and then swiftly as the descending knife he pushed Lacey forward, and seizing him, whirled him around and both stood facing a score of human fiends, each with murder in his heart. Instantly their swords were drawn as they looked into those eyes from which death was gleaming, and as quickly rang against the blades of those who struck at them from every side. The foremost, staggering forward from the force of the blow he had aimed at Lacey, sprang again upon the knight, whose sword passed through him at the same moment the weapon of le Bon, crashing upon the head of another, whose furious thrust had brought the blood from his shoulder, nearly severed it from his body. Ten to one were fearful odds, but the brave knights pressed slowly backward, looking upon what seemed inevitable fate, handled their swords with nerves of steel, skillfully sweeping aside the thrusts and guarding the blows aimed at them, and with strong arms, returning cut and thrust, their quick eyes catching here and there a spot unguarded in the impatience of their murderous adversaries.

Already three of their assailants were lying upon the ground, and, although not a word had been spoken, there were suppressed cries of pain ever following the busy blades of those determined heroes, who, with every sense alert, with every force of brain and nerve and muscle, struggled for their lives.

And now the tall figure, who, while the two friends, all unconscious of danger were talking joyously,

motioned the stealthy assassins on, presses forward as though, maddened with the desperate conflict, his own hand would finish the crime. Some one grasps his arm and speaking in a low voice tries to hold him back. He tears himself away and will not listen. The knights are breathing heavily; the terrible strain begins to tell. Blood is trickling down their arms and the handles of their swords slip in the red moisture with which their hands are wet. Their foes are gathering closer about them. Death stares at them. Its mocking skeleton dances before their eyes. They have been forced backward across the street until they can go no farther. A house blocks their further retreat. A light shines from the window, and from its sickly ray they can see the weapons that encircle them and guard the avenues of escape on either side. The circle draws nearer and the knights brace themselves for a dying effort. Something moves behind them. It is the door of the house, and their weight has forced its feeble fastening. Their quick sense notes the desperate chance, and springing within, they try to close the door. Vain effort; their murderous foes are too near. Pushing aside the frail barrier several have already entered. In his eagerness one is unguarded, and quicker than the lightning's flash, a terrible thrust from Lacey ends his part in the horrid crime. He falls and for the moment blocks the passage.

"Hah! France and St. Denis!" cries a voice that Lacey recognizes, and turning, he sees L'Enfans fairly dancing with delight, his long sword quivering as he springs forward.

"Magnificent!" he cries; "'twas a beautiful thrust! ah! so-so; you would! well, if you will have it," and the quivering sword stops a blow that was aimed at Lacey in that moment he had turned at the voice of the knight.

The assassin falls beneath the table where just before L'Enfans had toyed with the wine. In his rage he grasps the leg of his slayer and strikes at it with a knife he carries in his girdle. Maddened with the pain, the knight places his foot upon the neck of the dying man and crushes out the balance of his life as he would that of a coiling serpent.

There were others in the room, but they had escaped at the first sounds of the conflict by another entrance; all but the keeper of the place and a woman, one of the strolling dancers whose wit and pretty faces brought them more coins than their trade. The former had drawn a long knife and was about to assist his guest, but when he saw the numbers of the assailants, heard the sweeping clash of the swords and witnessed the struggles of the dying man under the table, he dropped the knife on the wine-stained floor and fled with a look of horror on his face.

More of the merciless foe are now crowding in. The face of L'Enfans beamed.

"Come in, gentlemen; what you lack in good manners you can make up in numbers. We shall have a merry evening. Ah! did I hurt you?" he exclaimed as he severed a hand which struck at him, and hand and sword fell to the floor. Towering, he stood, and with thrust and cut, and sword sweeping and circling like a meteor whose darting flame burned as it flashed, he seemed a hero of more than human presence, before whom the motley crew shrank for the moment appalled. Furiously the tall figure now presses forward. He sees only Lacey. Pushing aside the others he tries to reach him. Hate, revenge, every desperate passion seems to have found a home in his glittering eyes. He is now in front of them all. Lacey has not observed, for he has

turned to aid le Bon, who is beating back those who are trying to creep along the wall behind them. One moment the tall figure is drawn back as the tiger gathers, and then, with all the terrible force of the mad passion within him he springs forward. His sword seems already entering Lacey's side when it is caught and skillfully turned aside by the strong arm of L'Enfans, whose watchful eye nothing has escaped.

"Softly!" exclaimed the latter; "ah! we seem to be old acquaintances. By all the saints! even the Emperor's gardens couldn't take the murder out of your eyes!"

Words cannot express the baffled rage that blazed from the eyes that were now turned upon the stalwart knight, at whose head the tall figure struck with all the frenzied energy of his soul. Quicker than the blow was the arm of L'Enfans, and the red sparks flew as the two swords met. Then between these two there began a battle in which every other conflict ceased. Every other point was lowered and every eye centered upon the combatants.

Strange picture!

Cut and guard, thrust and parry, now each, in turn, leaps nimbly from side to side to escape some more determined lunge, and now, over each other's heads, the two swords ring and their long points quiver from the clash.

"By St. Turpin! that was neatly done!" cried L'Enfans, as the point of his adversary's sword pricked his arm. "Look out for the reply! Bah! that was a butcher's stroke. I thought you had learned of a master. So-so! 'twas but a feint, eh? Ah! so you will have the answer!" The knight knew the thrust that was coming. He had himself learned and practiced it many times, and when, after the double feints, the arm of his opponent shot

out straight toward his seemingly unguarded breast, he stepped lightly aside and the next instant his sword struck the side of his adversary's head and cut away the hood which fell upon the floor.

Gazing upon him with staring eyes and with an emotion which for the moment took away every sense of present peril, Lacey exclaimed:

"Guibert! My God!"

"Yes, Guibert! dog! viper! Did you think you had escaped me? Die, hypocrite!" and rushing upon him, the swords of Guibert and Lacey were crossed the second time.

Again the conflict began, and again the knights fought for their lives. L'Enfans sprang forward toward Guibert, and two powerful brutes rushed between them.

All this time the knight had treated the affair as scarce more than an evening's entertainment. Now his blood was up. One of the ruffians fell upon the floor dead from a single thrust, and the other, with a frightful cut in the shoulder, turned away, staggered a moment and then fell. Others sprang forward, but not till he had wounded Guibert severely in the arm. In his fury he had not noticed one who had stealthily separated from the others and was creeping behind him. Noiseless as the wild animal approaches his prey, the treacherous fiend steals upon him. Death is very near, but the hour is not yet come. In that room is one whose eyes have never left the brave knight. It is the dancing woman. In his rude way he has spoken kindly to her and shared with her his wine, and all through that storm of passion and blood and death, within her heart has been a great hope strong as the mightiest prayer. She is about to spring forward and cry out to him, when she sees upon the floor the long knife the keeper of the place dropped as he fled.

Stooping quickly she seizes it. No one has noticed. She comes nearer. The man is now close to le Enfans. His arm is raised. His eye already gleams with savage triumph. There is a sudden sharp cry. The descending blade falls ringing upon the floor as the long knife is plunged into the murderer's side. The knight turns quickly and sees the man still struggling with death, and the dancing woman holding the red knife, her eyes meeting his own piteously.

There is a sound now of horses galloping along the hard street. It grows louder. The ill-looking crew turn toward the door. Guibert has already disappeared, and as the Emperor's guards halt before the house, all have vanished; all but the dead men, five of them, lying upon the floor. Frightened as he was, the keeper of the place had done better than to join in the conflict. Running all the way to where the guards were stationed, he had given the alarm and implored them to hasten lest his guests should be murdered.

Viewing the scene within the house and noticing that Lacey was severely wounded, the officer insisted he should be placed on one of the horses while a dozen of his men escorted the knights back to their camp. Before they departed, L'Enfans took the hands of the dancing woman in his own and drawing her toward him, kissed her forehead.

"Brave little woman!" he exclaimed, and his voice was softer than when he had shared the wine. "You have saved my life! I thank you! I am rough in my way, but my heart will ever be gentle in its gratitude to you. Life is full of strange and changing circumstances. God grant, that within some future chance in your own life, may come to you, of your brave deed, a worthy counterpart." And when, last of them all, he leaves the house,

she stands, still gazing toward the door; then looking down upon the dead man, she drops the red knife upon the table and passes out; out into the darkness; to what home?

The following morning le Bon sits by the side of Lacey, who is lying upon a rude couch, for the wound in his side is still painful. It is the day set for his return, and his intelligent horse is already waiting. Taking the knight's hand, Lacey moves his head a little nearer.

"Dear friend," he exclaimed, "if in our loyalty to the Crusade we are brothers, the peril we have shared has made us doubly so. The dreadful scene of last night, in yonder room, forbids I should suffer you to depart with any thought unsatisfied; with any secret staying the warmer impulse of our hearts. Listen to my story, in which brief sunshine was followed by cloud and storm, out of which my soul, ever hoping, seeks the 'bow of promise.'"

And as Lacey told him of Minette, their love, the storm, the duel, the brutal threat, the letter himself had brought, concluding with the words, "and but for your arm all the love and hope would have been ended in the passion of Guibert," the hand of le Bon pressed his own, now softly, then tightening till the last words were spoken, and then pausing a moment while emotions of love, pain, hope, doubt and final trust played upon his countenance, he exclaimed:

"Say not so, my friend. God rules; do not forget L'Enfans. Whatever storms may environ you will melt away; whatever grief may enter, whatever wounds touch your soul with cruel purpose, her gentleness will soothe and heal, for around and within her life is something whose infinite beauty is but intensified in human love. And you, forgive me, that worthy as you are of angel's

love, I envy, aye, envy the longing, the pain of wound, the constant danger, the hope, the fear, the separation; for loving Minette her heart has answered you; seeking her eyes, you have dared; and I—I, looking into heaven, feared."

"You! best of knights; brave, kind, chivalrous, loyal! Is there a woman in France or Norman Italy worthy your love?"

"One; did I not say I had looked into heaven? Even so; for when I stand before her, so near my outstretched hand might rest upon hers, and my unchecked thoughts fancy the thrill of its touch, each beat of my heart sends the blood into my face, and, as I stand thus accused, she seems as immeasurably distant as the stars, that, smiling in the heavens, fill the boundless space with radiance. She is Louise, Lacey; your cousin Louise!"

The hands were clasped more firmly, and as the two knights looked into each other's eyes, each saw within the other an emotion that comes rarely to men.

Then Lacey answered: "We are in God's service. When our duty is accomplished our hope may safely trust His will."

Le Bon replied with a silent pressure of his hand. Then he continued: "And Guibert; he still lives. Do not go again into that dangerous quarter. How came he with the Greeks? From a chance word last night of L'Enfans I fancy he has seen him before."

"Yes, the night of the Emperor's banquet L'Enfans waited with me in the gardens. Guibert was there. Bohemond recognized him as one of Godfrey's knights."

"There is something strange in it, but if he be with Godfrey I will surely find him when we cross the waters. Till then God be with you, and adieu." And passing

outside, le Bon mounted his horse and Lacey heard him galloping along the road to Rodosto.

A month had passed since the incident we have just related. Wherever Guibert may have been, he had made no sign, nor had he been seen by either Lacey or L'Enfans. Lacey had entirely recovered from his wound, and only the day before he had sent a letter to Louise describing the affair with Guibert; every frightful circumstance, from the first surprise to the very end, and speaking of le Bon as his savior. This he had sent by Tancred, who was returning from a visit with Bohemond, to re-embark the army soon to sail toward the scene of the real beginning of the Crusade.

CHAPTER XIV

GUIBERT VISITS KILIDGE-ARSLAN.

THE leaves were bursting through the buds in the imperial gardens, for the spring was already well advanced, and the Crusaders, impatient at the long delay, were preparing for their final departure.

It was early in the evening. The darkness scarcely yet covered the camp of Godfrey, when a figure emerged from one of the tents, and, looking cautiously about, walked rapidly along the foot of the sixth hill, toward the eastern end of the city. Had L'Enfans been present he would have recognized one he now regarded as his own, as well as he knew to be the enemy of Lacey; for it was indeed Guibert, who, drawing his hood again closely about the lower part of his face, and bringing together the folds of his cloak so that they concealed the cross upon his breast, hurried along, heeding neither the silence of the old Byzantine cemetery, nor the five tower prisons that rose threateningly out of the gloom; nor yet the music of the Easter service in the churches of Mone tes Choras, the Divine Wisdom, and that of the Savior by which he passed. His quick steps did not cease until he had glanced angrily at the house from which the single sickly light gleamed just as it had before on the night of the conflict, and stood before the low building from which the shadowy forms crept toward the two

knights. The boat is there now on the opposite side, just as it was the night we saw him looking down upon the water from the room above.

Within, two men awaited him; one, the same who first touched his arm in the gardens outside the palace walls, and the other a low-browed ruffian, whose face proclaimed him one of the race hated by France. As he ascended the creaky steps a few words were spoken, earnestly and in low but cold and serious tones; for men, associates in crime and thought of ill intent, do not grasp each other's hands in warm and hearty confidence; and then the three descending to the boat, a dozen swarthy men unloosened its moorings and silently pushed it out into the deeper waters, where a single sail, catching the night wind, bore it southward over the Propontis.

All night the vessel sailed slowly, and from its low deck, in the early light of the following morning, Guibert saw the pines that covered the long promontory whose projecting cliffs sheltered the bay at the southern end of the sea. Into these still waters the boat was now entering, and he could see in the distance the green tints of the forests of oak and walnut below the pine that looked dwarfed on the hills above.

The sun had risen brightly in the narrow strip of clear sky over the trees in front, and then, as the boat touched the land, hid itself behind the clouds that hung heavily above. As Guibert and his companions landed, a company of Turkish soldiers rode forward to meet them. Their leader dismounted, and saluting Guibert, exclaimed:

"I greet you in the name of Kilidge-Arslan, who would see you in his capital, where he will, with his own lips, render you the promise you wish. He loves your spirit and most of all your deep hatred for even one of

our enemies. I hope you are fully recovered from your wound."

"I am quite well. Only the memory of the blow remains. It marks another measure of my vengeance."

"By Allah! you say well; nor is the memory yours alone. One of the Sultan's chiefs tells me that of the men he furnished for your undertaking, seven are dead and three more might well have entered paradise, for they will never ride or draw weapon again. But let us ride forward; 'tis but a few miles to where we shall find our morning meal prepared."

Horses were now brought forward, and mounting, they proceeded up the valley; the enemies of France, and Guibert, upon whose stony countenance no sign revealed that within his bosom was a quiver of remorse as he looked upon the dark faces around him. The strip of clear sky had disappeared, and now everywhere resting on the horizon clouds covered the space above; not a rift anywhere disclosing a spot of blue.

It was still light, for they had ridden all day, rapidly, when the great monument in the center of Nicæa, the Sultan's capital, rose above the four square walls of the city, and a few minutes later the little company entered the western gate, and soon after halted in front of a long building, the end of which appeared to extend over the lake Ascania. They were evidently expected, for servants were already waiting, some to care for their tired horses, and others to conduct them to rooms where they might be suitably refreshed after their long ride. Scarcely had they entered, when the call of a Moslem priest sounded from a minaret in the mosque near by:

"Allah Achbar," God is Great.

And looking out of the low window Guibert saw soldiers and tradesmen alike kneeling devoutly at prayers.

It was a strange sight, and he remembered the Easter music he had heard only the evening before. Then he noticed the servants, rising from their knees, eyed him curiously. They were looking at the cross upon his breast, for he had thoughtlessly removed his cloak. The door opened and Bagi Sijan entered. Noticing the cross, he ordered the attendants to bring in the evening meal and on their departure cautioned Guibert:

"It matters not," he continued, "before the Sultan; Kilidge-Arslan understands your Crusader's attire best guards our purpose, but the sign is not loved by our people."

As they concluded the repast, which had been eaten almost in silence, Bagi Sijan arose, saying, "We will go now to the palace; it is but a short distance. Cover yourself well that you may not be noticed by the Greeks, of whom there are many in the city."

It was quite dark when they left the building and a few steps brought them to the palace unnoticed by any in the crowds upon the street. It was an odd looking structure, presenting little of the magnificence of the imperial gardens of Alexius.

Before they reached the entrance, Guibert was startled by what might well have appeared to him an apparition. It was a gigantic Turk, taller by a full head than himself; with chest equally full and broad and a face one would never wish to see again.

Bagi laughed as he felt the quick grasp of his arm; "'tis only Ab Hassan," he said in a low voice; "the Sultan's bowman; truly a giant in strength as well as stature. He can hold two men of ordinary height dangling at arm's length, and the swiftest bird cannot escape his arrow. He is our friend here, but should you chance to be in battle, do not get within range of his bow."

"Mon Dieu!" replied Guibert, "I thought it was an animated mountain. If I am in the fight I shall watch the clouds."

Passing through the outer rooms, which were opened at a sign from Bagi, they now entered a chamber somewhat more richly decorated, at the further end of which the Sultan sat conversing with two, whose dress and soldierly air indicated them to be chiefs of the army. He was rather above the ordinary height, and his body, strongly built, was covered with a loose robe which extended nearly to his feet; its crimson color deepening the swarthy hue of his countenance, which expressed in every line, determined courage.

Stepping forward, Bagi stooped low and, addressing the Sultan, exclaimed in a low voice:

"I bring to you, Commander of the Faithful, him of whom you are already aware, Guibert de Barreaux, whose disposition justifies our cause. He received your letter, and his requirements seeming fair, already the tracing of our friendship has begun; needing but your word to complete the bond."

The Sultan acknowledged the words of Bagi and the silent inclination of Guibert with a wave of his hand, and addressing the two chiefs who were turning to depart, he said:

"Remain, Corbogha, and you Marmoud. It is fitting you should know our friend, with whom you may have much to do hereafter." Then, motioning Guibert to advance, he extended his hand, saying: "It is an evidence of trust; and now with hands joined you have my promise that for such service as you may render, everything not impossible to myself, to Corbogha here or to the Caliph himself, shall be yours. Are you satisfied?"

"It would ill suit the temper of a noble of France,"

replied Guibert, "to doubt the word of a brave man; but if in the vicissitudes of battle your highness lives not to repay that which will seem little to your high associates, but may mean much to me, were it not better written?"

The black eyes of Kilidge-Arslan glittered as he replied:

"And has it not then been already written in blood? Seven of my bravest soldiers are even now dead in service rendered you. Call you such payment little?"

"What matters a few lives?" answered Guibert with equal spirit. "If, then, you are afraid of a little blood, you have small need of me."

"You are bold," returned the Sultan. "By Allah! 'tis the ring of the metal I love. You shall have the bond. When starts the unbelieving crew?"

"On the day of Pentecost their boats will cover the waters."

"And are there then so many among them?"

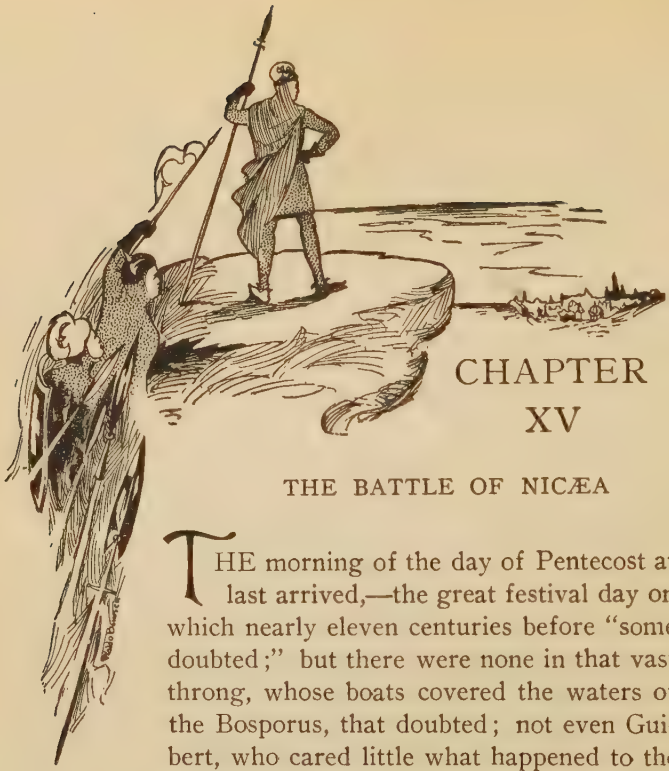
"With the four leaders and the lesser chiefs, four hundred thousand scarce exaggerates their numbers."

"'Tis not so light a matter, then; so many bodies dead upon our sacred soil will breed a pestilence. Have you any further wish?"

"None."

"Then you may retire. Come to me in the morning. I have a message for the Emperor your own hands must deliver;" and, with something like a smile deepening the lines around his mouth—"I forgive thee; thou shalt have the bond. I am sorry thy vengeance failed. Let it rest till we can better deal with thy enemies. Take this, too,"—handing him a purse of gold; "and use it in our service. And you, good Bagi, go with our friend, for I know you are both fatigued with your long ride."

The return of Guibert was without incident, and after a visit to the Emperor, to whom he was evidently no stranger, he carelessly loosened his cloak, that the cross might be displayed, and entered the Crusaders' camp unnoticed. Many of the knights and nobles had affairs of their own, and without a positive central authority such irregularities attracted little attention.



CHAPTER XV

THE BATTLE OF NICÆA

THE morning of the day of Pentecost at last arrived,—the great festival day on which nearly eleven centuries before "some doubted;" but there were none in that vast throng, whose boats covered the waters of the Bosporus, that doubted; not even Guibert, who cared little what happened to the infidel beyond the accomplishment of his own ends.

It was the army of Godfrey that was crossing while Raymond was marching from Rodosto and the great fleet of Bohemond sailed along the Propontis. Who can picture the enthusiasm, when the three armies met on Asiatic soil,—their banners floating from sea to horizon; each individual who carried ax or bow or spear, or who rode with lance and sword, feeling himself the champion of holy church, the deliverer of the Lord's Sepulchre and the avenger of Moslem insult and oppression.

Just south of the mountains Nicæa invited them. It

was the capital of Kilidge-Arslan, the most powerful Sultan of the north. Here sixty odd years before Duke Robert of Normandy, returning from a pilgrimage, was poisoned; none ever knew why or how, or the story of the deed. Nicæa must fall; and a great cry went up from the multitude who moved forward. It was the beginning of the months and years in which hope died in scenes of suffering, of thirst and of hunger, of pestilence and death.

The day following the union of the three armies, riding forward with other knights of Raymond's army, le Bon overtook Louise. She was with her mother. Dismounting, he advanced and extended his hand. It was the first time they had met since she had received Lacey's letter. In her gratitude she wanted to thank him, but try as she would, the words that had been a hundred times on her lips would not come. Looking for the moment into his warm, manly face, the scene came back to her just as Lacey had described it, filling her heart with an emotion she almost wanted him to know, and yet, fearing he should see, she turned away and remained silent.

Women know each other's every look; the falling eye, the changing lips, the poise; even the dimples, lost or deeply set; each is a word and all a story; but man never understands.

Le Bon thought she was displeased, and would have turned away leaving her pained as he was himself, when, hearing shouts and noticing some strange confusion, they rode on, and there just beyond an intervening hill, was a scene of startling contrast to the vast power of the Crusade, whose galloping companies of knights looked in the distance like undulating waves of a mighty sea. It was all that was left of the great undisciplined, dis-

orderly mob that more than a year before had, without plan or intelligent purpose, followed an unkempt hermit over the weary miles from France to Asia; ever lured by the magic word, Crusade,—few, indeed, knowing its full meaning.

Scarce three thousand, who, for months, escaping the enemies they had come to destroy, had starved and suffered the cold winter's blasts in the forest of Bithnia, now stood by the roadside, half clad, but with crosses sacredly preserved, weeping before their deliverers.

Some one was speaking, and, drawing nearer, they recognized Peter, who was telling the sad story. They could hear his words, and listened each in silence.

"Scarcely had we landed," he was saying, when quarrels began the disorder that led to our final ruin. Few of those, who had been aroused by my words at home, would listen to my counsel in the field. Marching in a tumultuous way we captured by our very numbers the fortress of Exorogorgan, but the walls of Nicæa resisted our further progress. For months we waited till the murmurs deepened into angry strife. Then false mouths brought word that the city would be an easy capture. 'Twas but a trick of Kilidge-Arslan, whose army lay concealed outside. All we could say,—Walter and I,—was of no avail. Reinaldo was chosen leader, and following him great numbers marched against the city,—Walter with them, for, knowing the danger, he would share it. Fairly in front of the city walls Kilidge-Arslan suddenly assaulted them. Thousands were killed—Walter among them; others, men and women alike, were taken prisoners, the men to become slaves, and the women, God help them! for a worse fate. Reinaldo, with such as were able, fled back to the fortress. Surrounded now

by an implacable enemy, starvation seemed certain. Hunger was beginning to tell; souls were growing weak, when a few of us, escaping from the fortress, wandered into the forests, while Reinaldo with the others, faithless to the Crusade, to their religion, to France and to God, foreswore all and became Mohammedans."

"And is it true then," cried Godfrey, who with Bohemond and Tancred were listening to the hermit's story, "that in your rash advance we have added to the number of the infidels?"

"A precious lot! By my faith!" exclaimed Bohemond, "another such addition would be worse luck to Kilidge-Arslan than the loss of a dozen battles."

"Stunned by shame and sorrow," continued Peter, "I know not how we lived,—hiding among the hills and getting such food as we could. All the winter days we prayed and waited while each day, here and there, little mounds marked our lessening numbers. Over the weary miles our slow return began, and each night we gazed upon the setting sun, hoping to see the western waters; then when an hour ago we saw this vast cloud of approaching banners, the whole sky seemed to us to be blazing with the glory of the cross. Whoever here is still weak of heart, let him continue his return! I, and those who are yet loyal to the sacred cause, will go forward with your companies."

The little band of sufferers now mixed with the knights; loyal hands greeted them and many were the questions asked. As the story ended, le Bon and Louise looked at each other with different emotions; he full of earnest faith,—his eyes sparkling with intense interest; she, thoughtful, touched with woman's sympathy, yet seemingly trying to sift, if she could, out of all the sentiment, not alone in the incident of Peter, but reflected

in the thousands of faces around her, one grain of truth.

"Can you not see," he asked, "the divine hand here, even as it was stretched forth over His people in the wilderness?"

"If this were true," she answered, "what of the ninety thousand who are dead or captured, or false?" Then, smiling sadly she continued: "Do not let us speak of it. I do not know. I was sure the Crusade was all wrong; that its very spirit was opposed to His love. It seemed to me that in the cross you wear was a promise of peace, an emblem of forgiveness; and yet the words you spoke to me in the harbor of Rodosto were such as I have found it hard to answer. And I have tried to think, to understand, to know where is the truth. Sometimes I seem to be approaching it, and the thought that would seize does but drive it farther away."

"And all the time," he replied, "it lies within your own soul, whose beauty all the world can see and whose strength lies deeper than words of mine could reach."

" 'Tis noble in you," she continued, "that you see only the best in others. I have been trying to thank you ever since you came, for the aid you rendered my cousin in that awful struggle. You are very brave. Lacey wrote me all about it, and said you were his savior. He told me, too, all that occurred between you the following morning as he lay wounded."

"All? Everything?"

"Everything. His love for Minette; the desperation of Guibert; his threats of revenge; all."

"Oh!"

"Yes, and now I have less dread; half the danger seems already past. In the Crusade you will be often near him. He calls you his brother, and says he loves you as I do Minette. You know Minette; all her sweet

gentle ways. For years we were never separated; each day of study drew the bonds of love closer, and each night our prayers were joined together."

"I have known her from a child; in her very gentleness lies every virtue. There is but one man worthy of her, and one woman as worthy the bravest knight of France."

For one moment the expression on the face of Louise was hard to define. She glanced at the knight; as if her eyes were questioning; then a rosy color flushed her cheeks and as quickly disappeared, leaving them whiter than before. Her lips parted and again pressed together, and emotions of joy and pain and doubt chased each other too swiftly to leave a trace of the thoughts that were passing within.

Then she answered slowly: "There is no knight worthier than yourself. You have been at the court of Philip and traveled the most of France and you have met other good and beautiful women and have spoken words as full of earnest thought to some, perhaps a few; it may be only one, as those that seemed to me came from a soul inspired."

"I have been taught and believe," replied the knight, "that all women are good, and all are in some degree beautiful. I have listened to the sweet music of the song bird warbling and trilling its divine melody upon the soft air. I have seen, flitting from tree to tree, another whose beautiful plumage seemed to fill the sky with brilliant color," and, with an inspiration, the impulse of which he could not resist, he seized her hand and pointing upward, said:

"I have seen, high, above the mountain's crest, an eagle floating, far, far beyond my reach."

Louise understood, and once more the rosy color filled

her cheeks, and lingered. It was a moment of happiness she remembered all her life, and such a moment never came again.

"Ah! here he is," she said, and the next moment Lacey dismounted, extending both hands.

The story of Peter had touched a nerve that vibrated from heart to heart. Nicæa was the cry of the Crusade, and on the 15th of May, 1097, the great sea of crosses appeared before the astonished and angry gaze of crowds of hated Turks behind its walls ere they had scarce risen from their morning prayers. And not less amazed at the unexpected sight was Kilidge-Arslan. In spite of all the past year of warning; in spite of all the stories his own people had brought him from Constantinople, and of the words of Guibert, he had made little preparation for the defence of the city. The forests of spears now in front of his capital was quite a different sight from the crowds of unarmed and pious pilgrims, who had in the years before lined the way to Jerusalem,—many of them barefooted, and all with soiled and tattered raiment; but he was not a man that even such overwhelming danger could appall.

Hastily closing the gates and covering the walls with his soldiers, he departed from the southern end of the city with a few followers, after assuring his people, "that before the seventh hour of the following day he would return and deliver them from the threatening scourge." And with more courage than wisdom he did return at the very hour named, with sixty thousand bronzed fighters, each one of whom desired nothing so much as to slay the Western barbarians, as, little knowing their strength and skill or understanding the exalted spirit animating the Crusade, they were wont to call them.

The battle opened on the morning of the 16th with

the utmost fury. The charge of the Turkish cavalry was like a tempest whose fierce rage assails the mountain's rocky wall, and, screaming with the shock, recovers and gathers and rushes again and again, till, exhausted, it turns aside and wears out its impotent anger over the unresisting plain.

The Christian knights met the shock immovably as the forest trees, and as the Turks fell away, their long lances gathered a harvest of death. Then from a safer distance the bowmen cut the air with their flying missiles, and those who carried spears moved forward, and others with axes, and still others with weapons of strange and cruel make. Here and there, the cross and crescent met and overlapped and then fell apart, leaving gaps between them, covered with bodies, some yet struggling while the red blood flowed, others who no longer heard the mad storm or felt its blows. The Crusaders pressed forward nearer the city, and from its lofty walls and hundreds of towers, a torrent of deadly missiles rained upon them.

For two days the battle raged. The numbers were unequal, but the Crusaders were unable to employ their full strength. Each division fought as best it could, and each regardless of the other. On the afternoon of the second day the battle raged fiercely. Le Bon was with his company of knights close to Raymond, who, dealing strong blows, was trying to reach Kilidge-Arslan. It was a decisive moment. Before the swords of Bohemond and Tancred the stoutest Turks went down,—horse and rider alike trampled upon and crushed by the surging mass of knights who gathered about those bold chiefs. The weapons of Lacey and L'Enfans rang and quivered as, side by side in the thickest of the fight, they forced the stubborn, surging foe backward into the crowded mass beyond. An arrow struck Lacey's side,

and glanced from his steel corselet; another cut the top of his helmet. Two more shivered against the shield of L'Enfans, and then they came in clouds. The space about them had been suddenly cleared of Moslem horsemen and in their front was a monstrous Turk, who, towering above all the others, was leading a thousand archers, from whose bows clouds of swift stinging messengers of death were flying, his own surest and most deadly of all. It was Ab Hassan, the Sultan's bowman.

"Dromme de l'air!" exclaimed L'Enfans; "yon giant seems a very catapult. Let us see how he will fight at closer range," and in an instant both knights dashed forward; each guarding himself with his shield. They seem flying to certain death, but victory lay in the boldness of the deed. A moment only of deadly peril and they had cleared the intervening space, followed by a score of intrepid souls. The foremost of the archers went down before the shock. Horses trampled alike the dead and dying. Around Ab Hassan the angry tide roared, and still the arrows of the mighty bowman sung sharply through the air, now ringing against the strong armor and now entering the exposed bodies of more luckless Crusaders. A blow from Lacey's sword knocked the bow from his hands. Another from L'Enfans left a long line of red upon his wide cheek, and returning, pierced his shoulder. Seizing an ax, the giant stood glaring; then the huge weapon, whirling about his head with frightful force, seemed a circle of fire enclosing the scarred and blood-stained face of a demon,—an infernal picture whose passion the changing scenes of years could not efface from the memory of those who lived through the months that followed.

Now, out from the line of knights that are galloping forward, a chieftain moves swiftly. Straight as the bowman's

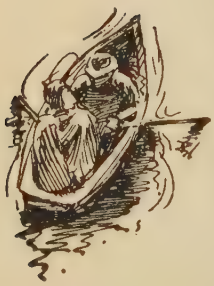
arrows he sits upon his flying steed, and holding his long lance firmly in his right hand, he clears the space, riding upon the mad giant as in a tournament. A hundred voices shout the name of Godfrey; and in another instant out of the shock that followed, the noble chief recoiled, and still firmly seated upon his horse, gazed upon the dead body of the Sultan's bowman.

The chance of battle, the fate of armies, the life of nations, all hang on seeming trifles. Kilidge-Arslan could not stay the wild disorder of the Turkish army, as the hitherto invincible warrior fell upon the trembling sands, and before the victorious Crusaders the hated foe fled over the plain; nor did they stop till hidden away among the stunted pines and rocky cliffs of the mountain miles away. And now, call it a mirage or an illusion, religious ecstacy or a mental vision, an imagined appearance of the unreal, a fantasy, call it what you will, there were among those pious souls, some, who, looking into the heavens, saw an army of celestial knights, with crosses and banners, move athwart the sky and fade away in fleecy clouds.

CHAPTER XVI

NICÆA SURRENDERED TO ALEXIUS

THE battle of Nicæa was the first blood; the first blow the Crusade had struck. It was the battle of giants, for the Turks had fought with a religious fanaticism no less passionate than that of their Western foe. Christian and Turk joyed when the cry of pain and the rattle of death followed their blows, and laughed at the crimson tide that reddened the sands. Each hated and slew for an idea—one to hold and guard a sacred spot, the other to possess as by diviner right,—and there is today many a Turk and Christian who would fight the old feud over, and maybe others will in the years or centuries to come.



Victorious, the Crusaders felt that in the exultation of that one battle, they were already paid for all the weary miles along the road from France and they thought of Jerusalem as but tomorrow.

Far away from danger of the flying missiles, Louise, with her mother and the other women who followed the Crusade, had watched the battle. She could see in the distance the lines come together and then

recoil; and then inwardly she saw the dying and the crushed,—those whose lives and hopes had gone out in the storm. The great masses seemed to her like two struggling monsters winding around each other and then tearing apart. Breathless she stood and watched the darkening clouds of spears and arrows; then she saw the knights charging, saw the gaps in their flying line, and saw them as quickly filled by those who rode over, trampling the fallen ones. Lacey! Tancred! le Bon! If one of these lay there bleeding, torn! Ah! which one dead in that frightful scene, would not make a wider gap in her life? If Lacey, how could she tell Minette the awful story and see her heart stop beating? If it should be Tancred; and then her soul repeated again every one of the beautiful words in which he had expressed his love. If le Bon! Instinctively her hands were clasped and her face grew suddenly whiter. Then she leaned against the great wheel of one of the camp wagons and tried to look again. The battle was ended and she saw the Turks flying, but she did not see the vision in the sky. An hour later Lacey rode up. His lance was broken and as he dismounted he cried:

"'Twas a grand battle and a glorious victory for the Crusade!"

"But you are hurt;" she exclaimed, noticing that he limped as he walked forward to take her hand.

"Only a scratch," he replied, "and all my own carelessness. A vicious Turk struck at me from the ground as my horse trod upon him. It was at the very closing scene of the battle. I was beside L'Enfans, and with about twenty knights we had ridden upon a thousand of the enemy's archers led by a giant whose strength and skill seemed more than human. I struck the bow from his hands and L'Enfans wounded him with his

sword. Then the whole army followed, and Godfrey, his horse leaping like a flying phantom, struck and killed the monster, whose fall threw up the sands like waves in the ocean. It was then, just as the whole Moslem army turned and fled, that I received the blow."

Louise shuddered. "And Tancred?" she asked.

"You will see him. He has covered the ground with Turks and himself with glory."

"And have—have you seen le—Monsieur le Bon?"

"Yes," replied Lacey, watching her closely. "Ah! Louise; if you could see him in battle! his eye quick, his hand firm, his face determined! not a blow of his lance fails, and he strikes as though his arm were iron; and strangest of all! I saw him, when for a time both sides rested from the fury of the battle, dismount and pull the spear head from a wounded Turk, and give the poor wretch water. Just before we charged the archers he was with Raymond striving, through a wall of lances, to reach Kilidge-Arslan. Already I love him as a brother. I should be proud if he were even a cousin."

Louise turned away her eyes. Then she said in a low voice:

"And you saw nothing of Guibert?"

"Nothing."

She would have said more, but at that moment Tancred appeared, full of exultation over the victory; nor could he help dividing for the time his passion for glory with his love for Louise. Last of all was le Bon, and as he looked at Louise, his modest, manly face illumined with the thought of a duty well done, he would have given the world to have sat at her feet and heard her speak one word of love.

Kilidge-Arslan, Sultan of Roum, lord of all the cities from Syria to the Hellespont, was beaten, but Nicæa,

his capital, was not yet taken. Three hundred and seventy towers fringed its solid walls, in front of which was a ditch deep and wide; and on the west the great Lake Ascania, stretching away for many miles, forbade the Crusaders' approach.

Those were stout hearts, that, assembling the morning after the battle, determined on the seemingly impossible task of its capture; and they built ponderous engines, huge battering-rams; swaying the great iron-capped beam against the stones till they began to crumble. Underneath their deep foundations, too, they dug mines, and, with enormous slings and cross-bows, they cast monstrous stones and darts, crushing those within the towers. And while they pounded the walls the army of Kilidge-Arslan again fell upon them, and was again driven to the mountains. Then Alexius, learning of their victories, added the strength of his own arms. He sent boats, too, which were drawn on sledges from the sea to Lake Ascania, and he filled them with his own soldiers. Then by land and water they beat upon the beleaguered city six long weeks; each day burning with fresh desire, they pounded and battered, and now the ever sounding strokes of the great engines began to tell. Here and there were breaches, through which they could see within. Already they tasted the sweets of victory and dreamed of rich plunder.

It was night on the 25th of June, 1097, and the Crusaders rested; for on the morrow they were to storm those torn walls. Over the lake the boats looked like sentries,—their outline reflected in the moonlight that glistened upon the water. On its surface a boat moves from within the shadow of the city. Two men are pushing it toward a vessel, largest of all the Greek boats. They have reached the vessel so quietly that there is

scarcely a ripple upon the water, and touching its side they are drawn on board by those who seem to be waiting. The taller of the two whispers a word in the ear of one of the Greeks who have assisted them, and he walks with them to a stairway, down which the three descend. Here, in the light of a hundred tapers, we recognize Guibert and the guide who first met him in the Greek capital.

Advancing a few steps, the Greek knocks softly on a door that bars their further progress, and at a word from within, they enter and stand before Alexius, who acknowledges their courtly obeisance with a slight wave of his hand.

Approaching nearer, and addressing the Emperor, Guibert exclaimed:

"Your imperial majesty knows full well the condition of Nicæa. After all it has endured, it cannot withstand the assault that is certain to be made with the rising of another sun, and Kilidge-Arslan begs your majesty to enter secretly with your army tonight, and, taking the city in the name of your empire, save it from the frightful scenes of bloodshed and desolating ruin that would follow if it yielded to the fury of the Crusaders."

"The Sultan is tardy," replied the Emperor, "after the warning you bore him from me weeks ago. Return, however, and say, that with the passing of the midnight hour my army will enter."

"Azzadin here, your majesty, will bear the message. My life would be worth little if I were found in the city tomorrow. He will land me on the shore that I may share the surprise of Godfrey."

"Do what you can, then, to moderate his anger. I fear it may be difficult; and yet I have the obligation signed by all the chiefs."

In the early hours of that June night Louise was restless. The day had been very warm, and the cooler breezes that were now gently blowing from the sea, not so far distant, was a grateful relief. Rising, she stepped outside, scarcely knowing why, and stood within the shadow of the spreading branches of a forest tree. All around her, and stretching out, far as she could see in the soft moonlight, was the Crusaders' camp from which not a sound was heard; nor was there any sign of life, save here and there, the silent movement, to and fro, of those who watched in the somber hours while others slept. In the distance stood the grim walls, whose torn and ragged front was already made a doubtful shelter to those within the city. She thought of the morrow and the storm that would rage; and then she looked up into the sky, whose unclouded arch seemed to her as if in the stillness it would cover the earth with a mantle of peace.

Over the lake she saw the Greek vessels, and looking closer, a smaller boat appears to leave the fleet and approach the shore. In the dim light she can see that it contains two men; and now it touches the land and one steps out. The two seem to speak a few words in low tones; then the one within the boat turns and pushes it swiftly toward the city, while the other walks up the little hill toward the very spot where she stands. She steps back into the deeper shadow. As he comes nearer she sees the cross upon his breast. The incident seems strange, and she looks again at the boat, wondering at the boldness of the Crusader. The man is now so close she can see his face; and then suddenly shrinking, she crouches behind the tree and presses her hand against her heart to stop its loud beating, for she recognizes Guibert. Ah! if he should know that within his reach

Lacey lies sleeping; and she watches ready to spring forward, trying all the while to stifle her loud breathing. But Guibert does not hear; he is muttering and she hears the words:

"Twice he has escaped me, and all through my impatient folly. The third time he will not escape. So she will be the first, then, to feel my revenge. But the blow will strike him none the lighter. I might have accomplished it that night in Constantinople; but, no, let the plan go on; 'tis well laid. Sacre! but the brutes take to the work kindly."

She could hear no more for he had passed on, still muttering. What did it mean? Surely Minette could not be within his reach; and yet, who else could his malignant words threaten? What was he doing on the lake? And who was he, that, leaving him, had pushed his boat on toward the city? Who were the brutes he spoke of; and what was the plan?

Passing inside and lying down she tried to think; nor was it till the hours passed, and the gray softened the eastern sky, that sleep came, fitfully, and with it dreams, from which she woke with a strange sense of undefined terror.

In the Crusaders' camp was a roar of angry voices, for, gazing toward the city they were that day to crush, they saw the rays of the morning sun shining upon the Greek banners that floated from every tower and all along the walls guarded now by the soldiers of Alexius. Mad with rage at being robbed of the booty and spoil of the rich city, Baldwin and Hugh, Robert, the Norman lord, Stephen, Raimbault, Raoul and Gerard and a thousand lesser nobles, would have hurled the whole force of the Crusade upon the Emperor who had thus grasped the prize won by their weeks of patient toil,

and robbed them of a day of blood and plunder. Nor was their rage the less that a message was received from Alexius that the city was his by the terms of their covenant, and that not more than ten Crusaders would be permitted to enter at any one time.

Bohemond smiled and Tancred would have quarreled with him. Turning toward the angry faces around him Godfrey exclaimed:

"Even so did we promise."

Then Raymond, looking upon them all with dignity, his face reflecting no trace of passion, said calmly:

"We left France with one object. We have sworn the sacred oath to deliver Jerusalem. What have we to do with Nicæa? Alexius assisted us across the water, and we helped him to his own. Let us push forward loyally then to our Crusade, for the summer is passing."

Seeing the great chiefs would not yield to their desires, the lesser nobles finally consented to move forward; and passing Nicæa, with many angry and covetous looks, they crossed the river and turning their faces to the southeast, marched toward Doryleum, confident in the thought, that they had at least beaten the proudest lord north of Antioch, and delivered his strong capital to one who was at least not their open enemy.

They did not yet know the temper of Kilidge-Arslan.

CHAPTER XVII

MINETTE GOES TO THE CRUSADE

THE morning after the death of Count Luis was a busy one at the chateau of Touraine, and the sun had marked well the advance of the day before the little company of knights led by the noble old Count started on the march for Tours. A train of wagons followed, loaded with their baggage, camp equipage and heavy armor, and among them were lighter carriages of curious build, in which were seated a dozen or more of the wives of those who rode before, leaving home and country to share in the glad enthusiasm of their husbands, for the Crusade was the magic word that stirred the pulse of every man and woman in France.

Minette rode beside her father. Her eyes sparkled as she sat firmly upon the back of the magnificent coal black horse, which, proud of his burden, danced and capered to the music of pipe and horn. The excitement and the morning air tinted her cheeks as the dew and the sun paints the rose and the carnation. Never before had she looked more beautiful; never before, not even on the night of the storm, had she been happier. The vast distance of the Crusade was already spanned in her thought. Its mission was a dream.

Arrived at Tours she visited the convent where she had passed so many happy hours with Louise, and received the blessing of the good bishop while the baggage was being loaded on a number of large flat bottomed boats that were waiting to receive them. Early the following morning the men and horses were transferred to the boats and the little fleet started down the river. It was nearly a week before they reached Nantes, for the heavily loaded boats moved slowly; and another week before all were safely transferred to the two ships the Count had engaged to carry them to Constantinople, and everything was ready for their departure.

Minette had never been out upon the ocean before. The freshness, the sea breeze, the receding land, the panorama of cities, the castles that dotted the shore, the swash of the waves, the sailors moving about the ship; all were a novelty to her. Then she remembered the letter Louise had written and watched for the historic cities of which she had spoken, asking her father to tell her more about them. And the Count, pleased with her questioning and her happy mood, told her again the story of the great battle of the Moors with Roderic, King of the Goths, on the plains of Xeres, and of the final destruction of the Arab army on their own grounds at Touraine. The latter she had heard many times and it always filled her with delight. Many other incidents he related too in which he and Count Luis had been engaged, and passing Cartagena, of which Louise had written, he repeated the story of Hannibal and the Punic wars.

Thus the weeks passed rapidly. To Minette each day brought a new happiness, for, whether gazing upon the strange coasts of Sicily, crossing the broad Ionian sea,

or sailing among the beautiful islands of Greece, she was all the time nearing those she loved, nearing too the great Crusade, and night after night as she was rocked to sleep over the quiet waves she saw in imagination the great interminable sea of banners; each bearing the sacred emblem, waving over boundless multitudes of soldiers and knights, foremost, proudest and noblest of whom was Lacey.

Early in the afternoon of the 22nd of June the towers of the Eastern capital seemed to rise out of the sea, and then the columns and walls and even the gates of the beautiful city could be plainly seen. Minette stood upon the deck, her face glowing with excitement, while the Count, who had a few years before visited the Emperor's court, pointed out the walls of the old forum of Constantine, built on the second hill from the very eastern verge of Europe, and the imperial gardens and palaces almost adjoining, now tinted with the bloom and foliage of early summer.

In her happiness she did not notice the boat, that, pulling from the shaded water beside a low building at the edge of the harbor, kept ever near; nor did she see that one of the three within, gazed steadily; never removing his eyes from the deck of the vessel on which she stood.

Slowly the two ships moved toward the crowds that stood at the long landing place, looking curiously at the standards of France and of the Crusade, both of which floated over their decks; and now scarcely moving they floated past the very spot where the two knights so nearly lost their lives, and then, grating against the projecting timbers, great ropes secured them firmly to the long platform built out over the water. The boat,

too, has drawn again to its shelter and the three men have mingled with the crowd.

And now the long imprisoned ones land and with glad hearts tread upon the solid ground. Even the horses neigh joyously as they are led forth.

A short distance from the harbor, and near the Emperor's gardens, the Count engaged apartments for himself and Minette and two of the nobles whose wives accompanied them. The others of the company were quartered in a long building near by, that had been used by the Emperor's guards, who were now with Alexius at Nicæa.

Tired with the long voyage and with the incidents of landing, Minette was lying upon a couch in a room facing the west. It was at the summer solstice, and in the lingering twilight and the fragrant odors from the park, that were borne upon the soft air which entered the open windows, pleasing reveries were drawing her thoughts from scenes that were real, into delicious fancies. But a few days and she would see Louise —and Lacey, and then she felt the pink coming into her cheeks. Only a little while before he had been there; perhaps had often passed the very windows out of which she looked at the western sky whose tints were yielding to the slow shadows. How brave he was! Hearing a noise outside she went to the window. It was only a dancing woman amusing some passing soldiers with her crude song. It was something new to her. She was fascinated with the woman and watched her till she disappeared, on her way to the wine rooms, in the distant shadows that hung over the streets.

Lying again upon the couch she could not shut out the face of the dancing woman. A dreamy sensation stole over her. She did not note the minutes that were

passing, or that the walls, and everything about the room, were fading into indistinct and formless maze. The face of the woman still haunted her. Now it was at the window looking in upon her. From its lips the smile had died away; the eyes looked at her hatefully, and every feature became hideous with passion. Then the figure changed into a monster, whose malignant gaze held her in speechless fright. Its hands are upon the sill and it is about to enter. The very extremity of terror breaks the horrid spell, and she springs from the couch and cries out. Then looking at the window she screams again, nor does she stop till the Count rushes in followed by others whose swords are already drawn.

Clinging to her father's arm and pointing to the window she exclaimed now almost in a whisper:

"Guibert!"

"Guibert, child?" and the old man went to the window and looked out. The others hurried out into the street with swords still drawn, running either way; then crossing into the gardens, searching the sheltering shrubs, and among the trees.

A man passing stopped and looked at them curiously. They questioned him, but he had seen no one; nor heard a sound, and when they returned to the house, they did not notice that, oddly enough, he turned about and walked toward the harbor.

Still trembling Minette could not take her eyes from the window.

"You are tired, child, and were dreaming," exclaimed the Count, "can you not remember now that you had fallen asleep?"

"I saw Guibert's face at the window," she answered. "I was not dreaming then."

"But Guibert is with the Crusaders, and if he were here, why should he wish to frighten you? Surely he would be the first to welcome us. But you shall have another room and in the morning you will smile at this fancy."

Then in an apartment higher up, whose windows overlooked the water, across which her imagination followed Lacey, she tried to sleep. But the face at the window would not be driven away. It was the same face she had seen when she stood by the big chestnut and told Guibert she would not be his wife. And she remembered all the words he had said; the misery and ruin he had threatened; the thorn she had touched when, as he hurried passionately away, she plucked the rose for Lacey, and the blood that had trickled down her fingers. Then she wondered at his presence; how he had known she was there, when not even Louise or Lacey had been told. What did it mean? And why was he at the window? The hours passed, and as she turned uneasily, she looked fearfully into the darkness lest she should see again the dread vision and the hateful eyes gleaming at her. Then there rose out of her own heart two friends, giants, who came to guard her. They were Faith and Love. And sleep came, and then the morning sun entering the eastern windows smiled upon her, and the cool breeze kissed her cheek till she awoke.

It was several days before the Count could complete his arrangements for departure from the capital, and it was not until the evening of the 26th, the very day that Nicæa had fallen, that his little company was again embarked, and with glad hearts sailed out of the harbor. In the morning they landed where two months before Guibert had met the company of Bagi Sijan on his visit to the Sultan. There they learned the direction the

Crusaders were taking, and turning their faces toward the southeast, they advanced slowly, keeping the road in front and behind well guarded, for they knew not at what moment they might meet bodies of the Turkish soldiers. Minette rode beside her father. Each hour seemed the beginning of a new life, and her heart was filled with the expectancy of a great happiness. Three days they journeyed without incident. On the morning of the fourth a few Turkish horsemen rode out from a cluster of trees, along the edge of the mountain on their right, and coming within a short distance, watched them curiously, and then, turning, disappeared again among the distant heights. Some of the knights would have pursued them, but the Count forbade.

Early in the afternoon something like a cloud appeared to extend along the dim horizon. Then it broadened, looking like the moving waves of the distant sea. An hour later, still far away, the whole earth seemed to be in motion. Extending both hands above his eyes, and gazing a moment, the Count exclaimed:

"It is the Crusade. I see the banners. Let us hasten forward."

A glad shout of welcome went up from those of that mighty throng who were nearest the knights of Touraine, when, long before the sun disappeared behind the mountain in the west they greeted them as brothers. The company of the Count was the first of those bands of pious souls that, unable to resist the inspiration, nourished in the very air of France, flowed in a ragged stream over the hills of Bithnia and the parched sands of Syria up to the closing scene at Jerusalem, and many were the questions asked and answered of distant France, whose sunny homes were pictured in the faces of the new-comers.

First to grasp the hand of Count Renney was Raymond.

"I knew you would come," he exclaimed. "We have fought many a campaign together. This leads to a greater glory. 'God willeth it.' Ah! here is our daughter. She was but a child when I last saw her. My wife is but a little older. We have promised our lives to something beyond the battles of the Crusade, and if it is God's will neither of us will return to France. We are nearing our camp for the night, and will soon see her and the other ladies whose devotion has brought them here."

"I have a dear friend, my companion at the convent, and her name is Louise. She is with Bohemond, who is her uncle. Do you know where I can find her?" asked Minette.

"She will be there with the others," replied Raymond. Then turning to the Count he continued:

"Godfrey, Bohemond and Tancred will join me in council tonight to discuss the plan of our march, and we shall be glad of your presence. Ah! we are nearer than I thought." Following the direction of his eye Minette noticed that those in front had stopped and the knights, already dismounted, were relieving their horses and themselves of the heavy armor and securing the animals with light ropes attached to stakes driven in the ground; while just beyond and near the center of the great encircling mass, that seemed to be throwing its protecting wings around them, more than a thousand wagons were being moved into a great square, in the center of which were a multitude of women; some caring for Crusaders who had fallen exhausted under the rays of the burning sun, and others

unpacking food and utensils for cooking and such other things as were needed for the comforts of the night.

Raymond directed the Count's followers to a space near the outer tier of wagons, and then the three dismounted. Minette and her father, together with the women who had already left their rude carts, followed him, through the maze of strange and curious vehicles, toward that hallowed spot where many a soldier's pain was softened by the gentle hand of love and piety.

With Louise the day had passed like all the others since the Crusaders had left Nicæa. Within her heart, beating in tune with diviner music, there was no chord in sympathy with the passion of the Crusade. Each weary mile broadened the space between love and hate, and deepened the chasm between the roaring of the tempest, a single breath of which she had witnessed, and the gentle music of the convent bells in sunny France. The mutterings of Guibert repeated themselves, over and over again, in her mind, filling her heart with foreboding all the greater that she could not understand them. She had told Tancred and Lacey every word the following morning. Tancred treated them as idle vaporing.

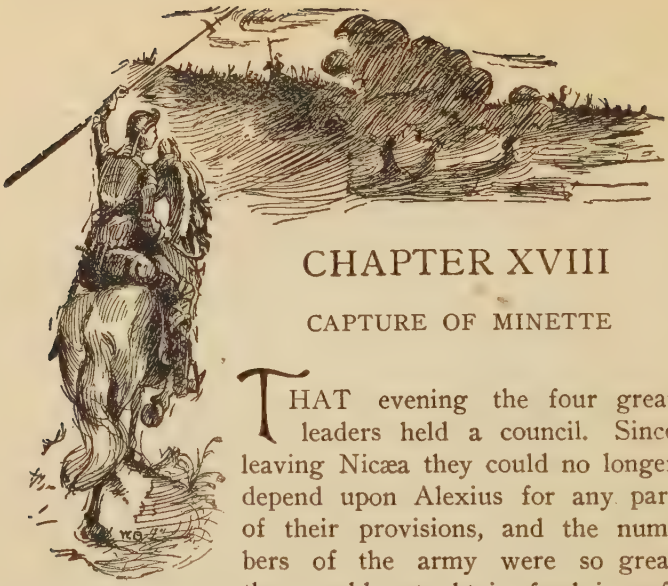
"How," he said, "could his vengeance reach Minette?" but he promised to watch him closely, and swore to kill him at the first sign that he would wrong Lacey. And then he would have talked of love, but the words sounded different than when they were at Taranto; and yet they were not less nobly said, nor had she less reason to look with pride upon his favor, for to his glory in arms he had added a growth of some more gentle nature, born perhaps of his love. But while he was speaking, another face had come before her, a face gentle yet manly, with eyes and features loving and

trusting as a woman's. She saw it as it had twice appeared to her, inspired; once by thoughts beyond her own, on the ship at Rodosto, and the second time by emotions of love the morning they had met Peter, and she had understood though a soul only had spoken. And through this face she could not see Tancred, and then, in her own thought of duty, she felt accused that she so gladly welcomed the appearance of Lacey. It was then that she told him, and he had listened thoughtfully.

Once only she had seen le Bon, and something of his quiet influence had floated around her all the day. She was now busily at work with the other women and had just assisted in binding up the limb of a soldier; one of those who had been wounded at Nicæa, when, turning around to get something from one of the wagons, she started as though she had seen a vision, and then sprang forward with a glad cry.

"Minette!"

"Louise!"



CHAPTER XVIII

CAPTURE OF MINETTE

THAT evening the four great leaders held a council. Since leaving Nicæa they could no longer depend upon Alexius for any part of their provisions, and the numbers of the army were so great they could not obtain food in sufficient quantities from the narrow tract they covered together, and already they had exhausted such supply as they had carried with them. It was therefore agreed they should separate; Bohemond continuing on past Doryleum, and the armies of Raymond and Godfrey, taking, each, different routes farther to the east.

There was a busy scene in the Crusaders' camp on the following morning. It was the first day of July. Slowly the great coil of wagons began to unwind; those belonging to the armies of Raymond and Godfrey leaving the little square of Bohemond's alone. Le Bon was with Lacey, whose company, with other knights, were several miles in advance, having held the line of danger since the beginning of the march. Already the road was cleared in front of Bohemond, but the great chief does not seem to have stirred, though the sun is well up in the sky. The army of Godfrey is disappearing toward

the east. On their right is the little town of Doryleum, north of which the great mountain of Olympus trends away toward the sea. Raymond, himself, now appears and informs the young knights of the change in the plan of march. They who had hoped to be ever together press each other's hands, for duty separates them. And while they sit upon their horses, still talking, looking back, they see something, a mere speck upon the northern horizon moving toward them. It grows larger, and gazing intently they see it is a horseman, a knight riding swiftly. Minutes pass, a quarter of an hour, and they can see his flying horse is being urged with sharpened point to still greater speed. The cross upon the rider's breast is now visible, and they can count the great leaps of his brave steed. Then a cloud of dust covers them as the animal's feet plough the parched soil in his sudden stop, and the knight who has covered the long miles cries breathlessly to Raymond:

"Fly, fly quickly! recall your army! Bohemond is fighting a host of Saracens who are raging through his camp like demons fresh from the fires of hell. The Count of Touraine who arrived last night, with his lovely daughter, is in the very center of the conflict. I myself will ride to Godfrey."

"The Count of Touraine and his daughter? Arrived last night? Minette?" Lacey waited to hear no more. His face was whiter than the cross upon his breast, and his hand, cold even in the burning sun, grasped his long lance as his noble horse, touched by the iron point in his heel, threw his feet into the air and sprang forward as the swift arrow speeds from the quivering bow.

And by his side rides one, silent, speechless, but half a head away, upon a steed as fleet. His pale lips are

tightly pressed and his eye, gleaming, measures the distance, and counts the minutes. It is le Bon. Louise is there; there in that scene of horror, and he miles away. Faster fly the foaming horses; and behind these two, three hundred knights ride as they never rode before.

Far away in front of them, where sky and earth meet, what a scene is there! Long before, when the Crusaders with Raymond and Godfrey were passing out of sight, and Tancred was just leading the foremost knights of Bohemond's army out upon the road, groups of Turkish horsemen began to appear in the west. Approaching closer, the scattering bodies grew into an army, and arrows, first singly and then in little clouds, fell among the Crusaders. Then clear to the distant mountain's side the whole earth seemed darkened by a swiftly-moving throng, like a living thing, within whose angry bosom is a tempest. Darts and spears follow the arrows, and then the storm bursts, and in its shock the Crusaders are beaten back, leaving those whose bodies are torn by the iron hail to be trampled upon and crushed.

Quickly Bohemond sends the messenger to the departed chiefs, bidding him fly; and then with Tancred and all the knights who are already mounted, he turns upon the tempest, fearless of its deadly roar. The foot soldiers have seized their arms and fight as God wills. The fierce Moslems have penetrated to the very center of the camp, and around the wagons the battle rages. Bohemond sees Kilidge-Arslan and tries to reach him. A wall of hoarsely screaming Moslems blocks the way, and as his arm clears the space it is filled by others. A dozen of the foe are around him, and, as he beats back their weapons, a Turk bolder than the rest rushes upon

him. In his hand is a ponderous ax. The murderous blow is already aimed, but before it strikes, the powerful horse of a knight rushes upon him. The fore feet of the two animals are raised in the air. A moment, all the fury of their riders seems to blaze from their red nostrils, and then the steed of the Turk falls. Horse and rider struggle with death as the plunging, roaring tide closes over them. Upon the back of the victorious horse sits L'Enfans. Bohemond has seen the bold deed; and now as a hundred other knights gather around, these two kill and slay as they shout the battle cry of the Crusaders. Near them Tancred has singled out Bagi Sijan. The two great champions rush together as two mighty winds. Both lances are shivered, and recoiling they draw their swords and charge again. But, brave as he is, the cunning Moslem cannot match the bold Norman, and at the first blow of the sharp weapon he falls. Springing to his feet he mounts the horse of a dead Turk and turns away, glad that the surging mass has separated them.

In the little circle in the center of the wagons are the women. Here, too, is all the wealth the Crusaders have brought with them. Here, Minette and Louise stand and look out over the awful scene. Both are very pale. Most of the others are crouching upon the ground, some crying, others speechless with fear, and some praying. Louise was thinking of her words to Minette as they sat together in the old chateau at Touraine looking out upon the red rays of the setting sun long ago; of the dread picture so often almost within her mental vision, and yet hidden beneath a veil she could not penetrate, some horror in which those loving ones were to be associated. Was it then near? Where was Lacey? Where was Tancred and le Bon?

The nerves are quivering along the fingers of the two cold hands that are joined. Their anxious eyes are strained, as they wander over that tempest of death, searching, ever in vain, for the loved ones; for if they must die they would die together. Far in the south they see a cloud of dust rising as if even to bar the sunlight. They do not know that beneath that cloud is the rolling thunder of hoofs that are throwing into the air the parched soil and the stones that lie along the hard road. They cannot yet see the mad flight of the foaming horses, nor their red nostrils, nor hear the champing of their bits, as the noble animals, trained to war, seem to smell the battle into which they are rushing; nor do they see the bold riders bending over the horses' necks, their lances firmly gripped,—nor that leading them all is Lacey, and le Bon but half a head behind; nor yet do they hear the words that are ever on the lips of these two, within whose burning hearts moments are hours.

"Minette!"

"Louise!"

"My God! we seem to be standing still."

Faster fly the horses, louder rolls the thunder of their hoofs.

The angry noise of the conflict comes nearer. Here and there Crusaders are flying past them; some with sickening wounds, and the blood streaming, and others, who in their wild panic have forgotten the crosses on their breast, have forgotten their religion, have forgotten their manhood, and in their mad fright would hide themselves on the ground among the women. Missiles of death fall around them thickly. The terrible charges of the raging Moslems have forced the Crusaders back, and they have reached the wagons. Those

on the outer circle are already overturned and broken. The two girls press each other's hands tighter. They can see the cruel eyes, almost feel the angry breath of the Saracen. The wagons are crashing together, and the deadly tide is rolling in upon them.

In her enthusiasm for the Crusade, Minette had thought only of a glorious march to Jerusalem. It was then a dream. Here was the awakening. A flying Crusader dropped his blade. Hastily she seized the weapon. The spirit of her father flashed from her dark eyes, and she stood as the despairing deer stands before the hunters.

Always in front, away to the right, away to the left, as far as they can see, are struggling masses. All over the wild scene living waves leap up upon each other like billows of the sea driven into the air by the storm, and in those mighty waves, Christian knights and brazen Moslems meet in an embrace of hate and death. And now the battle roars behind them and beats against their frail shelter.

Then, out of the frightful din, near them they hear cries that are familiar; cries of "Touraine! Touraine!" "God willeth it!" and turning, they see the banner that has hung for years in a little room of the old chateau; see the noble old Count and his little company of knights forcing their horses against the foe in a desperate attempt to reach and save them; see the terrible blows that are struck; see the falling and the trampling, and the red blood flowing. The Count is not striking for the Crusade; he does not think of Jerusalem, nor of the Holy Sepulchre; nor even of the cross he wears upon his breast. He is fighting for his child. Grand old man! brave knights! but the little handful grows smaller as one by one they sink before the power of the

surging tide, and Minette sees her father torn and bleeding as those who are yet alive are beaten back. One moment hope had again warmed her heart; then, in despair, turning her eyes to heaven, ill-omened birds of prey, hovering greedily over the scene, seemed to mock the prayer her lips would whisper.

Nearer the two girls the battle rages. In its roaring crash the wagons are being torn away. The last barrier is removed, and the mad, conquering brutes rush forward among the defenceless ones. Louise is being slowly borne away upon the horse of a Moslem chief, who struggles through the mad crowd. A bronzed ruffian has seized Minette. She strikes at him with the weapon she has been holding, and with a laugh such as might come from soulless devils, he takes it away, twisting her arm till the delicate flesh is broken and the blood covers her hand. She does not feel the pain, but struggles with the brute till she is drawn upon the horse; then in her desperation she clutches the monster's throat, and throwing her whole weight upon him, he loses his balance and both fall to the ground. Rising quickly to his feet, the angry savage would have killed her. Seizing her long hair he pulls her over to one of the wagons, and presses her slender neck against the great wheel.

A Moslem springs from his horse, there is a sudden flash of steel, the fingers of the heartless brute relax their hold and he falls to the ground, dead. Half unconscious, Minette feels herself supported by arms that seem to hold her tenderly, and then she feels a hand gently pushing back the hair that has fallen over her face. It is only a moment; then she hears the crash and the roaring, the screams and the cries of pain, and all the horror comes back. She looks up into eyes

that, dark and piercing, still gleam with anger; up into the dark face of a Moslem, an enemy. Something she sees, behind the anger in those eyes, like tenderness; and yet something from which she shrinks frightened.

He, whose vengeance has overtaken her assailant, is the one who first met Guibert near the Emperor's palace; he was with him in the conflict with the knights, and again, when Minette saw the face of Guibert at the window. He, too, had looked in upon the sweet innocent face of the sleeping girl, and as the sullen clouds yield to the soft rays of the sun, so the heart of the proud Turk was conquered by the unconscious Christian soul, and when the nobles had questioned him he departed muttering:

"Yes, Lacey must die—and Guibert!"

Bagi Sijan pushed his horse forward, and stooping tried to lift Minette upon the animal's neck. She still resisted and struggled to free herself. Then a tall figure, watching the scene, leaped impatiently down and seizing her, threw her into Baji's arms. He spoke a few words to the Turkish chief and disappeared. Azzadin touched the handle of his knife nervously as he witnessed the outrage; then muttering:

"The Christian dog shall pay," he mounted his horse and together Bagi and himself pushed their way slowly through the struggling host.

Now behind them is a sound that rises above the roar of the conflict, and turning their heads, out of the long cloud of dust they see the knights coming. In that one glance, they see the blazing eyes of the chargers; see the forest of lances and hear the wild shouts of the Crusaders who turn back upon them. Then the lines of the Crusaders open, and never slacking the mad race, the mighty column plunges through the opened spaces;

plunges into the line of raging Moslems, a human wedge that rends and tears apart the cruel, surging mass as the iron splits the gnarled oak.

Each of the long lances finds a victim. Horse and rider alike, of those who meet that living blast, go down before the iron storm, and now the sharp swords swell the crimson tide.

The heart of Minette beats wildly. Over the head of Bagi she has seen the brave knights, Lacey foremost of them all. She sees him ride into the storm, his brave horse plunging over the foe and his strong arm striking them down. He is so near she can hear the blows, and yet he does not see. She tries to leap from the horse, but the arm of the chief holds her tightly. In their wild panic the Moslems before the knights are pressing upon them and the crowd pushes them along faster. The distance between them is already widening, and in her despair she cries:

"Lacey! Lacey!"

Ah! God! he does not hear! Are there no angels in heaven?

The horse is now leaping swiftly over the bodies of the dead, and she can no longer see the loved one who is seeking her with strength more than human. Ah! dear and happy France! To what horror is she going? And now for the first time all her courage fails; faith ends in hopeless despair, and she lies upon the horse's neck sobbing as the child does in its weakness and fear.

The battle is not yet ended. Others fill the gaps made in the Moslem ranks; made by the dead and by those that fly. In spite of the terrible force with which they have driven the iron into the foe, the bold knights are but a handful, and now encircled by thousands of struggling Moslems, fiends, crazed by hate and thirst for

blood, they stand, a wall of sharpened points whose touch is death. Inspired, the Crusaders charge again and again, and cover the ground with the dead, Christian and Turk dying together. Away to the left Bohemond and Tancred and L'Enfans and hundreds of other brave horsemen are cutting their way toward the knights. The human waves lift each other into the air, and fall, and rise again, and the swelling tide roars and leaves its red trace upon the sands.

Again, a cloud of dust rises in the south, a cloud that fills the air and covers the sky. It is the armies of Raymond and Godfrey. Thank God, they are coming! Thousands of knights are galloping to the rescue, and hundreds of thousands follow them. Strike! bold wearers of the cross! Strike for the Crusade! Strike, brave knights! Strike for the loved ones!

Minutes are hours; then comes the mighty shock, and the Moslem line shivers, and shrinks away. The ill-omened birds flutter hungrily above while the Crusaders follow and kill the flying ones. Foremost of all is the Count of Touraine and all that are left of his brave followers. He, alone, witnessed the capture and the struggles of Minette. Fighting with all the desperate frenzy of a madman, he was powerless to reach her; and now, caring for neither Christian nor Turk, he is flying to her rescue as the lion follows the hunter who has captured its young; little heeding, in his agony, the death that rides on every side of him.

Over the plain and over the mountain sides; among the rock and cliffs, and through the little groves of stunted pine, the Crusaders followed the panting Moslems, and when they turned away, tired of the slaughter, even the bravest soldiers of Kilidge-Arslan still fled, swearing that "God Himself pursued them."

Returning from the pursuit, Lacey and le Bon are riding together. They are still many miles from the camp. A little way from their course, just to the right, a horse neighs. He is riderless and stands under a sheltering oak. He neighs again, and lowering his head touches something that lies upon the ground. The two knights turn out of their road, and, approaching nearer, see that a man lies there, dead no doubt; perhaps a knight, judging from the trappings of his horse. They ride to him and dismount. The horse has been rubbing the man's face with his nose, and has pulled off his helmet, which lies upon the ground. Something about the face is familiar, though there is blood upon it; blood everywhere. Lacey stoops down and looks closer. Then his heart seems to stop its beating, and kneeling quickly he takes the hand of the prostrate form. His eyes are staring; and he turns his white face to le Bon, and whispers in a frightened way, half gasping as if the breath forced through his lips were stifling him:

"My God! it is the Count of Touraine!"

And then le Bon kneels beside him. The hand is still warm, and they feel it quivering. He moves; his face changes; the muscles around his mouth work nervously; his lips part and close again. The soul is fighting for one moment of life. Then the light comes back into those eyes, and the noble face tries to smile its recognition. Memory comes, and the smile dies in a look of anguish. The pale lips whisper—it is their last effort:

"Save—save—Min—"

The whisper ceases; there is a low fluttering sound in the throat—and death.

Very gently Lacey pushes back the gray hair that has fallen over his forehead, and with his kerchief wipes

away the blood and the tears too that have dropped as he kissed the dead face. Then rising and looking into the face of le Bon as the two knights hold each other's hands, he cries:

"How shall I tell Minette!"

CHAPTER XIX

THE NIGHT ON THE MOUNTAIN

THE body of the dead Count could not be left upon the ground. Near by was the hut of one who in a crude way tilled the soil. Except a few sheep that were feeding almost at the door, there was no sign of life around the rude structure. Its owner seemed to have fled with the Turkish soldiers.

Attracted by curiosity, many of the returning knights had gathered around those who were with Lacey and le Bon. Some of them knew the Count, and they stood with uncovered heads, gazing reverently upon the dead face. Two of them walked to the hut and returned with rough tools, with which they dug, in the soft soil, under the branches of the old oak. Others assisted with their lances. Then the two knights again knelt beside the still form. Again Lacey stroked back the silver hairs

softly; joined the cold hands and arranged the cloak about the loved form tenderly. Very gently the body was lowered into the space that had been dug. All stood a moment silent, the points of their weapons resting upon the ground, each holding his helmet in his hand. Then, slowly, the earth was returned and the upper sod carefully replaced. No word was spoken, but there were prayers more powerful than those that come from moving lips, as Lacey and le Bon, marking well the spot, rode away with the others.

There are those who scoff at the suggestion that there is some subtle power which guides our steps into the currents that bear us along. Let those who will, smile or sneer at fate; things happen to us all, fortunes or misfortunes, as by a breath; opposing our will, thwarting each plan and hope. Circumstances, the creations of our will, lead by apparent trifling chance into conditions we would escape, yet cannot, just as the sliding of a door may shut away a pleasing landscape and leave us within the gloomy walls of a prison.

Only the night before, and in the morning sunrise, Minette had seemed to be nearing the very limit of her expected happiness. Now, sobbing on the neck of the horse that seemed more human than his master, she was being borne away; away from the joy she was about to grasp, away from the sunlight into the blackness of night. She was not yet away from the noise of the battle when the tide had turned, but in her grief she did not know nor understand why the chief urged the horse faster, nor why so many passed them at even greater speed and with frightened faces.

An hour passed; exhausted with her grief, calmer feelings came. She began to think, and out of the despair a little hope appeared; only a sickly bud, but

there was comfort in it. Some chance might come; escape was possible. Her father, Lacey, le Bon, and yes, Tancred—they would know; and instinctively she tried to look back, but the eyes of Bagi frightened her.

They had ridden many miles, and the hot sun was already past the meridian, when they stopped in front of a long, odd-looking house, near which were many other smaller; and out of a great vault in the ground men were bringing grain for the horses.

Released from the painful position she had so long occupied, Minette would have fallen had she not been assisted into the house. There, at least, one ray of light came to her out of the darkness. There, seated on a low stool, in the corner of the room she had entered, pale, silent, watchful, was Louise. The two unhappy ones rushed together. Neither spoke, but the tears that wet each other's cheeks told alike of the misery and the joy.

At last the picture was unveiled; but it was an unfolding picture, and they saw only a part:

Standing around a rude uncovered table, the Turkish soldiers are helping themselves to bread, milk and fish, caught in the river that flows just beyond the houses. Their cruel faces still bear the stains of battle, and while the two girls are watching them Louise suddenly grips the hand of Minette tighter, in a startled, frightened way, for there among them is Guibert. Minette grows whiter. It was he who threw her upon the horse of the chief. He is talking with Bagi Sijan, and beside them is Azzadin, who listens to everything that is said and speaks but little. The two girls cannot believe what they think; it is too dreadful; and yet he is there; there with their enemies, the enemies of France.

They are offered food, but they cannot eat. After

the meal they are taken to the door and placed in a cart together. It was easier for the captors. A vicious-looking Turk sits in front and drives. Guibert looks at them once. There is no pity in his face. A savage would have been more merciful. All the afternoon they are driven rapidly toward the mountain that stretches away in the southwest. Each hour the road grows rougher. The interminable hills over which the tired horses climb seem to grow higher and closer together; ending at last in a lofty wall that had looked blue in the distance, and whose stillness is broken only by the animals that climb its craggy peaks, the cry of the eagle and vulture and such birds of wilder nature as build their nests among the rocks around the dizzy heights; the winds that whisper and the storms that sometimes rage among the dwarfed shrubs, and the little brooklets born in snowy peaks; brooklets that sing and tinkle through the fissures that have broadened into valleys through centuries of the sprital music.

Along these winding valleys, along the narrow paths that project like friendly shelves from impassable walls, they proceed, more slowly now—some of the horsemen in front, and others following. The days were longest of the year, and yet for more than an hour the darkness had covered the side of the mountain when they reached a broad plateau, where dim lights shone feebly from a score of low houses. Here the riders dismounted and men came from the houses with torches. Sore at heart and weary with the torture of that awful day, the two girls clung together as they were led inside one of the houses nearest the center of the group. Food was again offered them, and they ate a little, for they were very faint; and while they ate, angry eyes, and worse, were turned upon them, as the soldiers who stood at the

tables, devouring the coarse food set before them, told to the curious ones who gathered about, the story of the battle.

At the conclusion of the meal Guibert spoke a few words to Bagi, who ordered an officer to separate the captives and confine them in different rooms, each to be well guarded. In the extremity of fear they begged to be allowed to remain together.

Bagi looked at Guibert, whose face showed no sign of pity; then motioning to the officer they were removed from the room. A moment later Azzadin followed, and touching the officer's arm, he took from a secret pocket within his short tunic a curious looking signet, and holding it toward him, exclaimed:

"You understand my authority. These two are in your charge. You will answer for their safety. They will remain together and you will place them in such room as will least remind them of their misery. See that a guard stands at the door; aye, and at the window, too, and allow no one, not even the chief, to enter."

Neither Guibert nor Bagi noticed the absence of Azzadin, for as soon as Minette and Louise had been led from the room, the two withdrew apart from the others and talked many minutes together. With the early dawn, Guibert was to return to the camp of the Crusaders. False to his religion, his country, his associates in the Crusade, and his manhood, he would have preferred, now that Minette was in his power, to have remained a leader among the wild spirits around him. It better suited his nature "to reign in hell than serve in heaven;" but his infamy was not yet complete. Lacey still lived; nor did he feel secure of his position, his influence with Kilidge-Arslan, if he could no longer offer to the Moslems the secret advantage of his dual

life. To the end of the Crusade, then; that must be the price of his monstrous desire. Afterward; well, let fate determine. The sun does not shine on France alone.

He had determined to see Minette before departing and give her one more opportunity of submitting to his will in the presence of a horror greater than she could endure. It had been no part of his plan she should have a companion; least of all Louise, in whose presence some ray of hope might remain. Separated, as he now believed them to be, each hour of darkness would increase the torture of apprehension, from which not even doubt would bring relief.

It was still quite dark, although the gray that precedes the red and the gold was already softening the eastern sky. Guibert arose, and noiselessly passing the sleeping figures that covered the floor of the long room, he entered the hall through which the two girls had been led. Near by, one who appeared to be an officer of low rank, walked back and forth. The passage was ill lighted, but he could see that leading from it were the entrances to several rooms, any or all of which he might be guarding. Approaching the Moslem he said, inquiringly:

"You are guarding the captives?"

"Aye, until the sun rises."

"You may perhaps have noticed one had eyes of darker brown."

"I did not notice their eyes."

"Sacre! Why did the fools bring them both? Well, it's but a moment; I will enter here first, and if it be Louise, she shall have no chance to speak." But as he approached the nearest door the Moslem stepped quickly before it.

"Stand aside!" exclaimed Guibert. "I would speak with the girl."

"You cannot."

"Cannot? You do not know me."

"Until sunrise I know no one."

"Who placed you here?"

"Azzadin."

"Azzadin? Not the chief, then! Strange! where is he?"

"I do not know."

Time was pressing. Already the daylight was well advanced, and Guibert heard the preparations being made outside for his departure. In his impatience he was about to spring forward, and, throwing the guard aside, force an entrance; but the glittering eyes of the Moslem, who detected the thought, and whose hand was already on his weapon, stopped him.

The two men looked a moment into each other's eyes. Guibert cared little for danger, and his imperious nature could ill endure that which opposed his will; but there was too much at stake, now the irrevocable step had been taken, to risk all to the possible mishap of a chance blow, and turning away he sought the chief.

Bagi Sijan was sleeping, apart from the others, at the upper end of the long room. He was a light sleeper, and, soon aroused, listened to Guibert's complaint. The two returned together to the guard and Bagi questioned him. He was himself puzzled that the soldier was no less unyielding than he had been with Guibert. Then he exclaimed in a low voice to Guibert:

"The man may be right. There are many things among our people that to you would seem strange. We had better seek Azzadin. He can set everything right."

But Azzadin was nowhere to be found.

A servant came to tell them the early morning meal was ready for Guibert and those who were to accompany him.

Then, turning to his impatient companion, Bagi exclaimed:

"It is a long ride to the Crusaders' camp; there is no time to lose. Leave this matter to me. Knowing our obligations to you, Azzadin has perhaps been overzealous in guarding the captives safely. It will delay the accomplishment of your wish but a short time. Kilidge-Arslan is no doubt in the valley below, where he will reassemble his army, and I will deliver the captives safely into his camp, most likely before the setting of the sun. The Sultan will not forget his word. I am a free lance and will be ever hovering near the Crusading army, ready to strike some weak or unguarded spot, by day or night, and will find means to speak with you ere the sun shall have twice spanned the heavens after your return. You have that about you, too, that insures your safety among our people whenever you may wish to carry your plans further."

With no little irritation and a strange sense of uncertainty, both of which he tried to conceal, Guibert silently assented to the words of the chief, and the two passed into the room where the others were already eating.

The horses were now ready, and in a few minutes Guibert passed outside and mounting his own charger, a magnificent Arab the Sultan had given him, galloped away down the sides of the mountain just as the sun lifted itself, beaming, over the distant peaks. And Guibert thought of the words of the Moslem guard, "Till the sun rises." There was an odd sensation at his heart; something new to him, something of uncertain fancy, and uneasy mood.

Without purpose his hand instinctively tightened on the bit and he half turned in the saddle. He was just passing a huge rock that towered like a sentinel, guarding the house he had just left. From its top and side an innocent-looking vine crept to a tree near by, and climbing along its trunk formed a curtain of wavy green, from which thousands of dewdrops sparkled; and behind this sheltering curtain two eyes glared at him, and lips that did not move whispered within:

"Let him depart. I might have killed him in the passage and none would have seen. I should not have been suspected; but it would have been hasty. It suits my purpose best that the traitor lives. It insures her safety among the wilder Bithnians. But when the time comes my hand shall strike the blow. Better he should kill Lacey. How beautiful she is!" And now the two eyes no longer glared, but glistened softly as the dewdrops among the vines, and the unparted lips whispered lower still, so that only the soul within hears:

"Can I become a Christian?"

Guibert and his companions were now a mile away, and stepping from behind the rock and the sheltering vine, Azzadin passed into the house, his impassive face hiding from every eye the secrets of his heart.

With the two knights, Lacey and le Bon, the ride to the Crusaders' camp after the sad scene with the dying Count was a mournful one. They spoke but little. Others they had seen die, and many; it was a part of duty, and it touched them lightly; but, coming from the grave, into which their own hands had helped to lay that loved form, the blow of the Crusade had struck home and they felt its pain.

All the long way the scene was in tune with their sad thoughts. Here and there, as they rode along, were

bodies of Turks; and not all dead, for some still moaned; and there were others, too, with crosses on their breasts, dying and dead, Christian and Turk together. With each passing moment as they neared the camp the words repeated themselves, over and over again, on Lacey's lips:

"How shall I tell Minette? How turn the rapture of our meeting into hopeless grief?"

The long summer day had nearly ended when they reached the camp and checked the pace of their horses as they entered the miles of space now covered by the sea of banners. At the very edge of the camp Tancred passed them with an army of knights; all dusty, soiled, weary looking, and many with blood stains not yet washed away. Most weary looking and anxious of all was the bold leader, who passed without seeing them.

"Whoever of the enemy has come today within reach of his sword, and still lives, bears a charmed life!" exclaimed le Bon.

"Aye," answered Lacey; "but I fear something unusual has happened. Tancred never tires in giving blows. Noted you something more than weariness, something fearful in his face?"

"There was, indeed, something; a look, the meaning of which I cannot express. I hope nothing has happened to Bohemond."

The knights moved still slower, for though some of the Crusaders had been buried, bodies of the dead Turks and their horses covered the ground, often in heaps as they fell. As they drew near the wagons, which had been replaced, and the circle increased by those of Raymond and Godfrey, their hearts beat faster. Within the circle was a sad scene; women with marks of tears yet

upon their faces, and some still weeping; sorrowing, no doubt, for those that were dead.

The knights dismounted, and standing a moment, their arms resting lightly upon the horses' necks, their eyes sought the loved ones. A woman came forward and spoke to them, and Lacey asked for the Count of Touraine's daughter. His voice was very low. Something oppressed him. The woman began to cry. Another came. It was the mother of Louise. She knew both the knights, and between her sobs she told the awful story. She had witnessed it all, and she told of the struggle; told how they were borne away, just as the knights had leaped upon the foe; how Minette in her despair had cried to him, to Lacey, to save her as the horse of the bold Moslem, who held her tightly, plunged through and over the struggling forms; how, blinded by her tears, she had seen them both disappear, as the Moslem host was swept away by the Crusaders; how Tancred with a thousand knights had ridden all the day in search for them and had just returned without sign or trace; and how she had seen the noble Count of Touraine rush madly forward, first in pursuit; nor had he yet returned.

Others had gathered about as she was speaking; all were crying. And the knights stood speechless. Their arms were heavier upon the horses' necks and their heads sank lower and lower till they touched the animals' manes.

Some, perhaps, there may be, who can write of a blow, a grief, whose pain stops little short of death. Upon this scene we must draw the curtain. We have no words to picture such sorrow.

That night the chiefs held a council and pledged themselves never again to separate. They planned, also,

to spend one more day searching for the captives; for Louise was niece to Bohemond, and Raymond loved the Count and his daughter.

At early dawn the knights gathered. Many thousands were sent in a dozen different directions. To the north, west and south, plain and mountain were swept clean, and not a sign. Inseparable, Lacey and le Bon had ridden together, scarce speaking, scarce daring to hope, all through the long hours. In the middle of the afternoon they overtook the column of Tancred far to the south. Some who were in front had come upon a Turk hiding within a hut. He seemed to be a tiller of the soil, and yet, beneath a loose frock, such as were worn by shepherds, he had arms that were stained with recent use. They would have killed him, but Tancred stopped them.

Approaching the man he asked:

"Dost love thy life?"

"As all men do," the Turk answered, the expression of his face unchanged.

"Where is the Sultan's camp?"

"I know not."

"Canst find, and bear a message to him?"

"Aye, if given time."

"Go, then; thy life is spared. Find the Sultan; bear him from me this message: Say to him the captives he hath stolen are of noble blood, daughters of princes; and that if a hair of either but fall to the ground, I, Tancred, will mete out to him such punishment, that from Syria to the Bosporus no human voice shall break the silence."

The Moslem turned, and as he departed his iron face was set in harder lines; nor did he look behind, till they had watched him disappear, a mile away, behind the

low ridge that climbed by slow degrees to the distant mountain. Had they but known what secrets were enclosed within those far-away peaks!

The sun had long since set, and the searchers had returned. Tancred walked nervously, back and forth, among the other chiefs, and le Bon and Lacey sat together silently; struggling inwardly with the uncertainty which kills hearts less brave, and yet, neither abandoned hope, nor would while life lasted.

Darkness settled over the Crusaders and the camp was still. Outside, a line of watchers guarded those who slumbered. One, farther advanced than the others, sat upon his horse under a tree whose shadow looked darker in the pale light of the summer moon. Something had arrested his attention, and his stalwart figure was all the more erect as he sat listening. His intelligent horse stood with ears forward to catch the sounds which each moment grew more distinct. It was the steady beat of a horse's hoofs. The Crusader who watches is L'Enfans. He has been out all day with the searchers, but nothing tires him and he loves the solitude and danger of the watch better than slumber in the camp. The sound comes nearer, and in the pale light he can see a horseman approaching.

"It cannot be an enemy alone," he muttered; "and yet, strange one should be returning so late!"

The horseman was now so near he could see the cross upon his breast, and a moment later his face. It startled him, and touching his horse he rode forward. The horseman stopped and both stood facing each other.

"Sacre! but this pleases me! There is more space here than in the wine-room where we last met, Monsieur Guibert; for so I believe Monsieur Lacey de

Hauteville called you. You see I have a good memory. Draw your weapon, then, and let us finish what we had scarce begun the night you had a taste for murder."

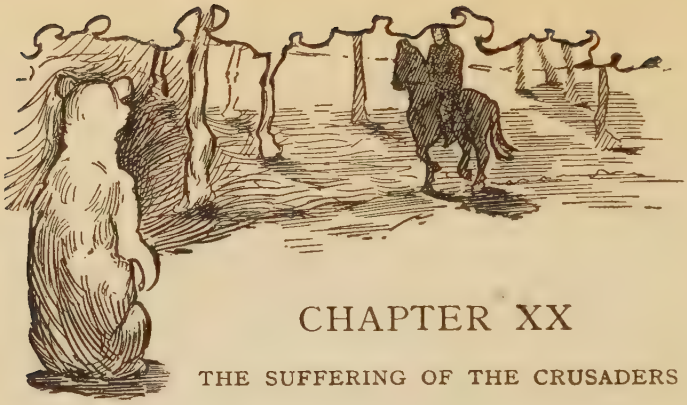
Furious, Guibert had drawn his sword half from its sheath, and then quickly thrust it back again, exclaiming:

"I will not fight you; not yet. There will be time to settle with you later. Stand out of my way!" And pressing his heel upon his horse's side he dashed forward.

Striking him across the shoulders with the flat of his sword as he passed, L'Enfans cried:

"C'est honteux! Take that, then, for a false knight, and may it burn you till we meet again."

And returning again to the shadow of the tree, L'Enfans began to think, a more serious task for him than to have fought a battle. He knew Guibert was an enemy to Lacey, but he did not know why. The more he thought, the more puzzled he became, and he resolved to tell Lacey about it the very next morning.



CHAPTER XX

THE SUFFERING OF THE CRUSADERS

THE following day the Crusaders turned their faces again toward Jerusalem. Much of the time Lacey and le Bon rode together. They were sore at heart. All their enthusiasm for the Crusade had disappeared; but in its place was the one hope of recovering the loved ones, and out of this hope, ever held in check by their grief and fear, there grew up in the hearts, whether the sentiment were true or false, what seemed to them a deeper sense of duty, a nobler faith, a more exalted piety than they had known before; for so love and sorrow ever soften the emotions, and elevate and broaden the soul. Week after week they rode, ever foremost of all the great army, knowing neither danger nor fatigue; but each day and hour earnestly searching the horizon for some sign of the army of Kilidge-Arslan, in whose camp, wherever it might be, they felt sure were the loved ones, who in the bitterness of captivity might be threatened with peril and misery to which death itself would be a welcome relief.

But the army of the Sultan was nowhere to be seen. The lessons of Nicæa and Doryleum were not such as he cared to have repeated, and he kept well in front of

the Crusaders in their march toward Syria. In his flight southward he called to his aid two allies whose weapons were sharper than the swords of the Crusaders. They were hunger and thirst. Everywhere he demolished the wells and destroyed the food. Marching under a broiling sun, parched and burning with thirst, torn by the pangs of hunger, what could the bravest do against such enemies? The horses of the knights fell upon the burning sands and were greedily eaten. One by one, those who had been bold in battle died, and the hot winds covered their bodies with the drifting sands.

Thousands had already perished, and thousands of others within whose bosoms enthusiasm was burned away, turned their backs upon the Crusade, choosing in their misery, rather to brave the weapons of the Moslems than to longer endure such cruel tortures. But the great throng staggered on; their eyes staring wearily over the broad desert. Their throats were parched, their lips dry and cracking. Every limb and muscle seemed on fire, and their skins, no longer cooled by nature's refreshing moisture, shriveled and burned as in a fever.

And the desert winds blew the hot sands into their faces and blinded them as still these suffering ones, held in the grip of fate, were borne along, day after day, unable, if they would, to resist the influence which had marked them as the makers of history, even though but an incident in the great story of the world.

Late in the afternoon of one of the hottest days the Crusaders rested. Their suffering had reached a point, as it seemed, beyond human endurance. To their despairing hearts no ray of hope brought relief. Nothing but faith remained; nor, looking upon a still cloud-

less sky, which gave no promise of rain, was that strong. Death, alone, seemed certain.

The horse of L'Enfans had died the day before, and he had walked, with hundreds of others, whose animals had long since fallen upon the sands. Unaccustomed to marching on foot, heat and thirst had wrought fearfully upon his muscular form, and in spite of his fortitude and determination, he was now lying unconscious, breathing painfully in short convulsive gasps.

Lacey kneeled by his side, and, holding his hand, the hand that had struck such blows for himself, gently fanned with his helmet the hot temples, along which the blue veins seemed to be bursting. Le Bon had just ridden up, and dismounting spoke to the knight, who did not answer. The two young men looked at each other. Each was himself suffering all the agony of thirst, and both felt that water alone could save that great heart they had learned to love; water, and quickly, too.

Le Bon looked a moment at the suffering knight, then at Lacey, and in an uncertain way his eyes wandered over the desert. Something he saw drew his attention, and he looked closer. Touching Lacey and pointing over the broad expanse before them, he exclaimed:

"Do you not see a dark outline yonder that looks as though there were trees?"

"I do, indeed," replied Lacey. "But even so?"

"Where there are trees there must be water near; else in these burning sands they would perish, for we have dug deep into the shifting soil and found no moisture."

Lacey's eyes brightened with new hope, as he glanced again at the unconscious knight, who still lay breath-

ing painfully, and le Bon quickly removed the trappings from his horse.

"The poor animal has borne my weight all day," he said. "Let him rest here; my own limbs will carry me faster. Something within gives me this moment new life. God has not forsaken us. Stay you with L'Enfans." And without another word he started at a brisk gait, seemingly fresh as before they entered the burning tract.

There was no knight in the Crusade more enduring than le Bon. In the full vigor of early manhood, not an ounce of superfluous flesh impaired the abounding flush of perfect health, and his muscles, trained by active service, were firm as iron. Strongest of all were his qualities of soul, which never weakened in their purpose or faith. With rapid strides he pushed his way through the yielding sand, keeping his eyes fixed on the dark outline. His first glance was an inspiration, and faint, almost hopeless, as would have been the possible conception to others, as it was indeed to Lacey, his soul never doubted. Each step increased his confidence. Soon he could distinguish the trees; a little scattering forest that seemed to stretch away for miles. Between himself and the trees something seemed to be moving, numbers of little animals, and as they approached nearer he saw they were dogs that had followed the army. Some of them came up to him when he called them, and stopping a moment, he saw their hair and even their paws were wet, and he pushed on.

Another mile, and he was among the trees, feeling the grateful shade. The rich foliage waved and the leaves whispered invitingly. Then, flowing quietly in their very midst, he saw a river, not broad, nor deep; but water! water! thank God! and plenty of it for the whole army.

Never did pebbly brook or giant falls, or the mossy bank of a noble stream look more beautiful. In that one glance, all the weeks of torture were forgotten; but not for a moment did he forget the knight who lay dying for a drop from that gentle stream. He sprang forward and, lying down, drank till he felt refreshed, and bathed his hot face. Then he kneeled upon the bank and prayed that God would guide him to the loved ones as He had to the river; and filling a leathern pouch, which he carried, with the precious fluid, he hurried away to carry the glad tidings; his heart full of joy, and yet fearing now lest he might be too late to save L'Enfans.

The sun was rapidly disappearing from the western horizon when he returned, and glancing at the knight, saw that he still breathed. Still kneeling beside the sufferer, Lacey looked up into that beaming face and the story was told. Quickly from the leathern pouch they moistened the lips and poured a little of the precious fluid into the throat of the prostrate knight. There was a low sigh. He breathed deeper. Another swallow; his eyes opened, and reason came again. Then Lacey placed the water to his own mouth. Delicious moment of renewed hope and faith, of joy and gratitude. Others were crowding about them and le Bon shouted the glad news. Like an electric flash the story passed from mouth to mouth, and the great multitude, men and animals, in a tumultuous throng, darkened the sands that stretched away toward the river, as the soft twilight cast its shadows over the sky. Strong men cried in their joy when they reached the stream, and in their eagerness threw themselves into it, and drank till some were crazed and others died.

The two knights bathed the face and head of L'Enfans, taking care not to waste a drop, and at intervals allowing

him but a swallow. And he soon sat beside them, and wondering at the strange scene, made them tell him all the story, while his serious face pictured his gratitude and the silent pressure of his great hand told his thanks more eloquently than in spoken words. An hour later he was able to sit upon one of the horses. Lacey led the other and le Bon walked by his side. They talked but little as they followed the footsteps of the Crusaders; but in those two young hearts were thoughts nobler than the Crusade; thoughts born in love, exalted in such faith as only great souls can understand, softened and broadened by grief, and matured in determined courage.

So dreadful had been the sufferings of the Crusaders from thirst that at this little stream more than three hundred died in satisfying their greed for water. Once fully refreshed, they pushed bravely forward again, and soon after arrived in Pisidia. Here they found water courses abundant, a rich foliage; grapes, just ripening on the vines, and food that the army of Kilidge-Arslan had not been able to destroy. To their weary souls it was a paradise.

Here a strange incident occurred, through which the Crusade nearly lost one of its strongest leaders. Lacey and le Bon had been riding since early morning, far from the army, hoping to discover some signs of the army of their old enemy, Kilidge-Arslan. They had captured a Turkish soldier and had released him on his imparting the information that the Sultan was encamped about thirty miles to the south, and that the two captive girls were there, closely guarded. They were returning about the middle of the afternoon, hopefully discussing between themselves various plans for the rescue of the loved ones, when, entering a thick woods, they heard a great commotion and savage growls near by. Riding rapidly

forward, they saw Godfrey engaged in a terrific struggle with a bear, while near by lay a Crusader, seemingly dead, his clothes nearly stripped from his body. The enraged animal held Godfrey in a deadly embrace, snarling and biting at his shoulder, while the brave Duke, unable at such close quarters to use his sword, was trying to draw his large hunting knife. The two knights quickly leaped from their horses and plunged their swords through the heart of the brute before he could turn to his new assailants. Released from the vicious beast, Godfrey fell to the ground. He was seriously injured and blood was flowing freely from a score of bites, many of which had penetrated to the bone. It was several minutes before he was able to speak and give an account of the affair.

"I was riding," he said, "farther from the army than I should, unattended, to examine the country from yonder hill for some signs of the Moslems. Suddenly I came upon the Crusader who lies there. How long the fight had lasted between him and the monster I know not. It was a fearful scene. The man was fighting desperately, but he could not free himself from the brute. His clothes and flesh were being torn, and I seemed to hear the crushing of his bones. Before I could spring from my horse he had fallen and the mad beast turned upon me. You know the rest. Mon Dieu! Your two faces were the most welcome sight my eyes ever looked upon."

As he ceased speaking, Lacey turned toward the Crusader. The man lay with his face turned from them. He was not so seriously injured as had appeared, and was beginning to recover from his unconscious condition. Lacey gently assisted him to a sitting position and spoke to him kindly. He started at the sound of the knight's voice and turned his head quickly. Their eyes

met and both sprang to their feet. The wounded Crusader staggered against a tree, while the two glared at each other without speaking. Noting the strange scene, le Bon rose, and glancing at the white face of the man who was clutching one of the lower branches of the tree for support, the man whose life they had helped to save, exclaimed:

"Guibert!"

No other word was spoken. The two knights recovered his horse, which had escaped into the wood and stood trembling not far away. They placed him upon its back. Lacey turned away toward the Duke, and le Bon, placing the reins in his hand, held the bit firmly a moment while he said in a low voice:

"God alone knows the secret of your heart. Take warning from the mystery of His purpose in this affair. If you meditate further wrong, take care that we do not meet again."

A defiant expression passed over Guibert's face. His lips parted slightly and he seemed about to reply. Then, turning, in evident pain, he rode slowly toward the camp."

Godfrey was too badly hurt to sit upon his horse. Lacey remained by his side trying to stop the flow of blood, while le Bon rode to the outer edge of the wood, and, seeing some knights at a distance, called them. Some hurried away for a litter, while others remained, for the place was none too safe. An hour afterward the Duke was placed upon the stretcher and carefully borne to the camp. The two knights followed the slowly moving company. Neither had spoken for many minutes; then le Bon turned to Lacey and said quietly:

"Did you notice the perspiration scarcely yet dried

upon his horse, the marks of long travel and the weariness of the animal?"

"I fear I was not attentive. I was sick at heart and turned away. Yet, even so, surely you do not think he could have been upon the same errand as ourselves?"

"No, not quite the same; and yet, Lacey, do you remember the incident L'Enfans related of his meeting Guibert alone, far out upon the watch the night before we left the battle ground at Doryleum? Suppose he has seen them, perhaps this very day; knows where they are!"

Lacey started, and the two looked at each other almost breathless.

"Do you think——" began Lacey.

"I know not what I think," interrupted le Bon. "There is some strange mystery in it. Ah! we are at the camp." Then, riding closer to his friend, he almost whispered, "We must watch Guibert. I know one of the knights near to him. He will return a kindness I once did him. Lacey, if Guibert leaves the camp again, I shall follow him."

The injury Godfrey had sustained was even more serious than was at first supposed; nor was that the only calamity which at the time overtook the Crusade. Count Raymond was taken ill with a fever and was so near death that prayers for the dying were already being said over him. The loss of these noble leaders would have been a misfortune that might well have appalled the stoutest hearts; but the Crusaders never for a moment lost courage. Every step they had taken increased their firm resolve, and within a week from the time they had entered this fruitful country, they resumed the march toward the great chain of the Taurus, the defense and the gate to Syria, carrying the two suffering chiefs on litters,

"'IF YOU MEDITATE FURTHER WRONG, TAKE CARE THAT WE DO NOT MEET AGAIN.'"

and in spite of the extremity to which they were reduced, the exposure and rough usage, both recovered.

South of the mountains the city of Tarsus, the birthplace of St. Paul, appeared in the distance. In advance of all the others, Tancred hastened forward and planted his flag there on the bank of the Cydnus, which flowed through the center of the city. Then occurred a scene, which, at another time, would have involved the Crusaders in a battle with each other.

Baldwin, Count of Hainault, who was brother to Godfrey, arrived almost immediately after Tancred, and, jealous of the latter, impudently claimed possession of the city, set up his own flag and threw the banner of Tancred into the river. Tancred was the stronger and by all odds the better and bolder warrior of the two. A month before, the insolent Count would not have lived a moment after the brazen insult. Already, Lacey, who was with Tancred, and a dozen other knights had their swords drawn. On both sides the followers of each stood breathless, waiting the signal.

Strange, how an influence for good or evil, though the soul from whence it sprang be living or dead, present or absent, molds and shapes, changes, even, the characters of men, just as a thought, noble or low, speeding in unseen currents, touches a heart, or many, leaving there its seed, which grows and ripens.

No one knew the secret that lay within the bosom of Tancred; nor did he himself know to what extent the character of Louise had entered into his own life, until in that awful day at Doryleum, she was swept from him into a fate, the possible horror of which he dared not think. Day after day he had traveled the burning sands or climbed the rugged sides of the mountain in silence, and night after night, in the stillness, he had looked up

at the stars, and seen again the room in the castle at Taranto, and heard Louise speak of that dread picture, almost revealed, yet hidden, that ever haunted and frightened her. And in these silent hours of pain something of her own soul, though far away, was leaving its impress. All his life he had loved the ring and clash of steel. Tournament and battle were his joy, and his eye sparkled with delight when he looked into the face of one who dared oppose him with sword or lance. The very fullness of his early enthusiasm for the Crusade was in its license. His cup of glory could be filled to the brim and no Christian knight suffer from his strong arm.

Now, without a trace of passion upon his face, he looked calmly into the eyes of Count Baldwin, who stood glaring at him; then motioning to his knights to put up their weapons, he recovered his flag and rode away with his followers.

The Crusaders gazed upon the scene in dumb surprise. For one brief moment the honor of the great chief seemed irrevocably lost; then his courage, on a hundred fields, was remembered and his devotion to the Crusade was recognized in the Christian grace which yielded to his duller rival. They honored him for his bravery, which, even at the risk of honor, was ruled by gentleness; and yet they did not know that such bravery was greater a thousand times than that which wins a battle. Tancred knew that all of noble bearing in the deed, all that was brave and gentle, was from the influence of Louise.

Kindest of all were the thanks of Godfrey; nor was he sparing of censure of his brother, who had brought the first dishonor upon the Crusade. Baldwin, however, cared little for Godfrey's chiding, nor for the contempt

which he knew many of the Crusaders felt for him, and he now resolved to pursue his own ambitions. Leaving the army, he marched with his own followers toward the rich cities of Armenia. At Edessa he found a city still ruled by Alexius, and under the Christian faith. Here his intrigues produced such dissensions that the Greek governor was massacred, and he was crowned Prince of Edessa.

The Crusaders suffered him to depart; most of them, no doubt, glad to be rid of one whom it was now seen that personal ambition alone had brought to the Crusade, and, continuing their march with pious resolve, ever gaining greater strength, arrived, late in the fall, before the city of Antioch, noble for its antiquity, magnificent for its splendid palaces and adornments. Much as most of them had heard of its fame, few in that vast army had ever before looked upon its wealth and beauty. Almost within their camp, as they halted before the proud city, was the once famous Grove of Daphne, with its bending forest of cypress, among which were still remains of the old temples, and their eyes followed the shaded road, through rich gardens and villas, springs and wells and brooks, to the golden streets within the strong walls. Can we wonder that, aside from the burning impulse of religious zeal which filled their hearts, they coveted the possession of this metropolis of Syria; its rich temples, its churches, its columns and its towers, and all its golden allurements?

Like the low voice of the distant sea a murmur arose and deepened into a loud cry, which trembled on the air, along that vast line of knights and soldiers, "God willeth it!" and they rushed upon the city as the untamed animal, maddened with desire, plunges into unknown perils.

Those within the proud city laughed at their vain efforts, and from the strong walls rolled great stones upon them and pierced them with arrows; and Baghisian, the governor, taunted their futile efforts. He little knew their temper, nor dreamed of the certain fate that would punish his sneers a thousand fold. With all their loss it was an easy lesson to the Crusaders, and they waited, but never ceased their efforts. But while they sought to starve the Moslem host within its walls, they themselves grew hungry as the months passed. Their very numbers invited an enemy without, more powerful than that within the walls.

In the first weeks of plenty they wasted the rich harvests waiting in the fields, stripped the trees and vines of their fruit and cleared the subterranean vaults of their treasures of grain; for in the soft climate, the beauty of the spot and the inviting pleasures with which they were surrounded, they fell into idle ways and became unmindful of discipline, of their own peril, and for a time even of their sacred mission. Then there came a day when they sought in vain for food. Hunger tortured them, and for the first time doubt came. Then, as the want grew keener, those who were weak of heart deserted the Crusade. Peter, himself, was one of the first, and there were nobles, even Robert, the proud Duke of Normandy, who joined the fugitives. Tancred hurried after them and forced them to return and to swear never again to abandon the Holy Cause.

In the midst of their suffering, the Turks made repeated sallies, punishing them the harder, and they infested the camp with Moslem spies. Then, when the situation seemed no longer possible to bear, Bohemond ordered that a number of spies who had been captured, should be roasted and eaten. Great fires were built up

and a few were suffered to escape that they might tell the story. Consternation filled the city, and none dared to show themselves outside the walls. But now from the distance a greater peril threatened. Hundreds of thousands of fierce Saracens were gathering under Corbogha, Sultan of Mossoul, greatest chief of Syria, while not far away was their old enemy, Kilidge-Arslan. Suffering and danger united those bold hearts in the old enthusiasm. Victory could no longer be delayed. Antioch must fall, and the genius of Bohemond opened the way.

CHAPTER XXI

THE TRAITOR REVEALED

NEVER for a moment had le Bon forgotten the words he had spoken to Lacey, many weeks before, as they rode into the camp together. Day after day he had haunted the quarters of Godfrey, often assuring himself with his own eyes that Guibert was still there, and as often questioning his friend, who kept faithful watch. It was soon after the incident just related, and late one afternoon, that the young knight who had pledged him such faithful service appeared and, hastily taking him aside, told him that Guibert was that moment leaving the camp. "Even now," he said, "you may see him, riding along the edge of yonder knoll as if he would avoid too curious eyes." One glance and le Bon mounted his horse. He was glad Lacey was not there, well knowing that he who had become more than a brother, would insist on sharing the adventure and the peril. Leaving such word, therefore, with a Crusader, as he knew Lacey would understand, he turned to depart. The young man begged to

accompany him. Looking at him a moment, le Bon consented, and the two rode away together.

Outside the camp, they kept well within the shelter of tree and hill, never losing sight of him they cautiously pursued. They had already ridden an hour, and the sun had disappeared in the western sky, for the closing days of winter were still short, when they noticed that Guibert was riding more slowly, and to avoid discovery they stopped in a little thicket of cypress. The way had been growing rougher, and scarcely a mile in front they could see Mount Casius, the necropolis of the old city. It was well they had stopped where they were so perfectly concealed, for a moment later they saw a Saracen horseman advancing toward Guibert. He appeared so suddenly they were startled; and their breath came quickly when the two met and they saw Guibert take something from his tunic, show it to the Moslem and return it again to his bosom.

They stood motionless, watching the two, who rode away together toward the grim mountain, whose solemn walls, already enclosed in the early shadows of night, held in their embrace the bones of those who had lived a thousand years before. And in the deepening twilight they fancied they could see other shadows moving among the rocks. Hastily dismounting, le Bon exclaimed to his companion:

"We can ride no farther without discovery. Stay you here and keep the animals hidden among these friendly trees. I must learn more. If I return not before the midnight hour, ride back to camp, as best you can, find Monsieur Lacey de Hauteville, and tell him what has occurred."

With these words le Bon turned away, and, concealed by a long ridge that extended toward the west, he walked

cautiously but rapidly in the direction of the shadowy cliffs. Keeping well to the south, an hour later he was ascending its sides. It was quite dark and he could see nothing. A little higher up he came upon a level track that seemed to have been hewn in the mountain. It was the way over which the dead had been carried, and from it the crumbling rocks rose abruptly. He was certain that Guibert could not be far away, and pressing the ghostly wall closely, he turned northward, scarce breathing lest the slightest sound escape his notice. A noise above his head startled him. It was a piece of rock, that, loosened from its crumbling bed, was rolling down the cliff above, shivering the stones in its way. He stepped quickly back, just as it struck a great slab-like rock by which he had stood, knocking off the huge shelf-like ledge in which its upper part was fashioned, and seeming to split its center from top to bottom. Interminable echoes followed the crash; echoes that, high above his head, seemed to be the laughter of uncanny spirits. Then out of the stillness that followed, there arose another sound, a noise more alarming, for it was of no weird fantasy. It was the beat of horses' hoofs, not dull, but sharply, for they were very near.

Scarcely a hundred yards in front of him there was an abrupt wall, from which the mountain bent sharply away, shutting out from view everything beyond. Directly opposite, across the way of mourning, was a broad and quite level circular space, covered with trees, where one might easily be concealed, but the horsemen were apparently too near for him to reach it without discovery. A less resolute man would have been lost. Quickly drawing his weapon, he pressed closely against the great stone that had been split by the descending rock, hoping that in the darkness they might pass without notic-

ing him. If not—well, it was for Louise, and he was a knight.

Already the horsemen had turned the sharp bend. He could see they were Moslems, a score of them. They rode with slackened pace and he could hear them talking, but could not understand the words. As they approached nearer he pressed more tightly against the mountain wall. The ponderous rock yielded to his weight, and a moment later he had nearly fallen into what seemed to him a grave within the very bosom of the mountain. His heart beat faster than when he had stood with sword ready, waiting. Far away within the hiding place in which chance had so strangely thrust him, he fancied he could hear something moving like the beating of wings against unseen walls, and he vainly tried to peer through the darkness. Little did he then know that he was indeed within a sepulchre, and in the very spot where nearly seven hundred years before, Zeno, the anchorite, had frittered away his closing years in vain seclusion.

He had little time to indulge in ghostly fear. A danger more real pressed him too closely. The horsemen had stopped in front of his hiding place; so near he could have touched them with his weapon. Some had dismounted and were examining the shattered pieces of crumbling stone. Then one exclaimed in French that he could understand:

"It is as I thought—a stone has but rolled from the mountain."

"In good truth, it made noise enough, then, to waken into new life all the dry bones with which you say the mountain is filled."

If the strange situation in which he had been so suddenly placed had invited some apprehension foreign to the bold heart of le Bon, it was quickly dispelled by the

voice of the second speaker. It was the voice he had heard in the wine room of the Emperor's capital; the voice of Guibert. He could not mistake it. Approaching closer to the aperture made by the loosened stone, he listened, scarcely breathing.

He who had spoken first now addressed a few words to the others, and they crossed the narrow way and waited in the wider space among the trees. Then le Bon heard again the voice of Guibert.

"Good Bagi," he exclaimed, "it has been all too long since we have met, and I have wondered at thy long silence. The seeming old man who entered the camp today was a glad surprise. He played his part well. Never was bigot pilgrim more devout. But he ran a great risk, for Bohemond swears he will roast every spy found in the camp. But tell me first of her I left in thy keeping. For the other I care not."

"Both are safely concealed in yonder city. Azzadin himself conducted them there, where, in a building close by the old forum of Valerius, they are well guarded. From the windows of their prison, they look out upon a park along whose walks none may tread without permission of the governor. They bore their peril bravely. Baghisian would have given them to the people, but for the Caliph's word. I sent a messenger nearly a month ago, when they were first safe within the walls, to tell you, but he was killed while trying to enter the Crusaders' lines, and since then I have been in the south, aiding Corbogha, who is even now advancing with an army greater than the Crusade. The loitering dogs who have blighted these rich valleys will soon feel their vengeance. If the Crusaders will but wait! Do they still hold to the plan of starving the city into yielding?"

"I fear not. Even now there is talk of an assault;

various plans are being considered, and it may come through some trifling incident, a sortie, or careless watch. I will try to keep you advised. But there is now no settled plan; nothing but increasing desire and the reckless temper that hunger brings. Better advise those within the city to move not outside the walls, and send messengers to Corbogha, urging that he lose no time. And this reminds me. Before the battle, which must soon come, I would see her—you know the one."

"It is quite safe, and may be easily accomplished. In a few days I return again. Meet me here a week from this hour, and I will conduct you through the gates. 'Tis but an hour's sharp ride, and by Allah! she should be glad enough to see you."

"I will be here at the hour. I do not see Azzadin with you."

"Since we reached Antioch he has taken strange fancy to the city. Something important, he said, kept him within the walls tonight."

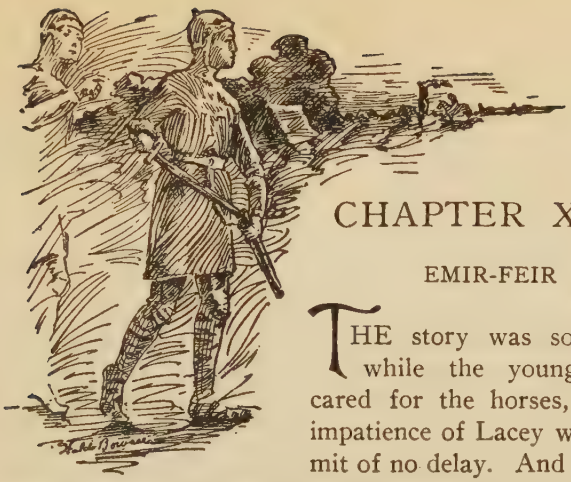
Standing breathlessly within the gloom, le Bon had already heard enough. All the toil and danger of the night's adventure had been well repaid. He knew now the full meaning of those strange doubts that had entered his mind that afternoon so long ago. Guibert was then doubly a traitor. But with it all a great happiness came over him. He knew where the loved ones were, and the words of Bagi, "but an hour's sharp ride," repeated themselves over and over again. Louise was then so near, and a great wave of love floated out into the soft air, through the moonlit space to the heart of Louise.

Strange that at the very moment she should have arisen, and, walking to the window, gazed out into the night, wondering whence came this new and sudden hope that filled her heart.

In spite of his impatience now to return and relate to Lacey all that had occurred, le Bon was obliged to remain a full hour longer and listen to the story of the Moslem chief, of the gathering of those who had lived after the battle of Doryleum, the march southward, through a country far to the west; the hasty rides his own band and those of other bold leaders had made to destroy the food in front of the Crusaders. And in that hour his heart was filled with such indignation at the words of Guibert, that he could scarcely restrain his desire to spring from the spot and with one quick blow silence forever his treacherous tongue.

He was glad enough when the scene ended and the chief called together the horsemen, who had waited among the trees. Then when they had turned and disappeared around the bend of the mountains in the direction from whence they had come, he listened a moment to the beat of the hoofs; then cautiously extricating himself from the gloomy sepulchre, he moved down the abrupt side of the cliff, noiseless as a shadow, and walked rapidly toward the cypress trees whose branches were outlined against the sky. The young knight was glad enough to see him, for the hours had been long, and with few words the impatient horses sped swiftly away, reaching the camp as the midnight hour deepened the slumbers of the Crusaders.

But among those unconscious sleepers was one watcher; one whose anxious eyes had ever wandered toward the western sky; whose ears had listened for some sound. It was Lacey.



CHAPTER XXII

EMIR-FEIR

THE story was soon told, while the young knight cared for the horses, for the impatience of Lacey would admit of no delay. And while he was listening, the angry blood deepened the color in his face and left it white again. For a full minute he walked back and forth without speaking. Then, pausing in front of his companion, he exclaimed:

"Strange we did not suspect before; and yet——"

He did not complete the sentence, for at that moment both knights saw a horseman riding slowly along the edge of the camp as if he would not be seen by any who even at that hour might be stirring. They shrank closer within the shadow, and watching intently, saw him start, and pull the rein tighter on his horse when he observed the young knight removing the trappings from the animals he had led away; and as he turned his head so that his face was plainly visible, each whispered the word:

"Guibert!"

Evidently there was something in the circumstance that disquieted him, for as he rode on, he looked about the camp as though ill at ease.

Lacey sprang to his feet, and had drawn his sword half from its sheath, when le Bon caught his arm and exclaimed quickly:

"Not yet; it would spoil all. We have now the key. With it we may unlock the door."

"You are right, dear friend," replied Lacey. "Already I have a better plan. Listen, and you will see that while you were following this bold adventure, I have not been idle. None, better than you and I, know that Raymond and Godfrey are brave and noble chiefs; firm in their piety, unwavering in their resolution, true to their own exalted souls, and to the principles and purposes of the Crusade. Neither the duplicity of Alexius, the frightful losses we have already sustained in battle, the terrors of the desert, the peril of our present situation, nor the stout walls of the city in front of us have shaken their unfaltering resolution; but grand men and determined leaders as they are, neither of them is equal to Bohemond in military genius; and while their iron hearts would battle against the cold walls that shelter the foe, he has found a surer way; and yet, one that will need the courage of a few bold spirits. There is in yonder city, one who is called Emir-Feir. He was once a Christian; but between slavery and disloyalty to our Christian faith, he chose the latter, and became a seemingly good Mussulman. Nor did the spirit with which he undertook the obligations of this false faith appear to be of necessity alone. Such indeed, was his apparent zeal for the faith of the Mussulman, that he grew in favor, and Baghisian rewarded his perfidy with an office of trust, making him keeper of three towers and gates of the city.

"As you are aware, the gates have often opened, sometimes for armed companies who have fiercely attacked such unsuspecting bodies of our people as were seeking food, and at others for those who issued singly, or here and there a few; those who would part with such scant supplies as they had, in their love for gold. It happened

that but yesterday one of the family of the renegade chanced upon L'Enfans, and whispered in the ear of our friend, that if he could but see Bohemond, he had something to say of such interest to that chief that he would be grateful to whoever should conduct him there in safety. Suspecting little of the man's mission, love of adventure, which forms so large a part of L'Enfans' character, decided the matter; and though somewhat doubtful, I imagine, whether it would not have been better to have carved him up upon the spot, the man was brought at once to Bohemond, who after a few words, spoken almost in a whisper, became so interested that raising his hand quickly, he turned to L'Enfans and told him he might retire. Astonished, and not a little fearful for the safety of the Duke, he came to me immediately and related the whole affair. I was reminding him that in all the army there was none quicker of thought, of eye and hand than Bohemond; few indeed, his equal in personal encounter; though I was much puzzled myself, and solicitous too, when a Crusader came with a message that Bohemond wished to see me.

"I shall never forget the expression of blank surprise on the face of L'Enfans, but I could not stop for further words, and repaired at once to the quarters of the Duke. I found him walking to and fro, evidently in earnest thought, while the strange visitor, the Moslem, of whom L'Enfans had told me, was standing, closely watching his face. As soon as he noticed my presence, Bohemond ceased his walk, and said:

" 'Lacey, I have sent for you because I want one, bold, resolute and wise withal for a most important mission. This man that you see dressed in the garb of an enemy is of the family of Emir-Feir, who has within, three of the strongest towers of the city. He was of the Christian

faith and likes not the shame of the false prophet, though he hath received honors at the hands of the infidel. His heart never echoed the words his lips uttered when he became a Moslem.' Then, approaching me closer he whispered so that I alone heard:

"'So at least he says. And,' he continued, 'he would confer with me through one whose tongue can guard a secret that has blood in it. I dare not speak of the matter to one of the other chiefs till all is arranged; if indeed, a thing of such moment is possible, and my first thought hath turned to thee. I have watched thee well, Lacey, ever since thy fervent heart brought thee to my banner. Thou art wise and shrewd beyond thy years, and brave too. There is danger in the mission, and yet not more than this one has risked in his presence here. Wilt undertake it?'

"I do not need to tell you, dear friend, my answer. Bohemond looked pleased, and taking my hand he said further:

"'Go then with this man. Keep yourself well covered with your cloak. It will be fully dark when you reach the city. Be cautious. Conclude with Emir such terms as your judgment warrants. Already they have my sanction, for'—and here he whispered again in my ear—'our situation is becoming daily more desperate. God speed you, for I shall feel somewhat ill at ease till I see you again; and, yes, take that hearty fellow L'Enfans with you a part of the way that you may instruct him to silence.' Then putting a purse of gold in my hand he added, 'Here is something too that may be useful to Emir-Feir.'

"In good truth I felt guilty in departing on a mission in which our hopes might be buried in some fatal chance without seeing and confiding all to you, but there was no

reason I could urge for delay. A few miles from the camp I parted with L'Enfans, who promised secrecy, and left me with a doubtful glance at my companion. Then we hastened along, the Moslem and myself, scarcely speaking. As Bohemond had said, it was quite dark when we reached one of the gates, beside which a tall tower lifted itself above the gloomy walls. It seemed odd to me that I could see but one man in it. He appeared to be watching us and when my companion made a sign, which I could scarcely notice in the darkness, he disappeared, and a moment later the gate opened and we entered.

"I will not attempt to describe my first thought as I stood within the city; nor will I deny that it was with some apprehension that I saw the soldiers in Moslem garb lining the walls and strolling about. A man who spoke with authority appeared at the gate, which was quickly closed, and conducted us to a curious structure built of stone. A door opened and closed of itself when we were inside—he who had received us and myself,—for my former companion had not entered. I was not mistaken in the thought that I was with Emir-Feir, who after looking at me carefully made himself known and asked my name.

"'Does Bohemond, then,' he added, 'confide in my intent?'

"'This is perhaps my best answer,' I said, handing him the purse of gold.

"'Ah! 'tis a good reply, and weighty.' Then he added, 'What further reward will be due such risk as I shall run?'

"'Whatever you may desire in reason; if gold, double the amount of your asking shall be given; if honors and offices of trust, ask what you will.'

"'It is then settled; but do not think my desire to give victory to the Christian princes is wholly for worldly gain. 'Tis justice to myself if I accept such gifts. The future is uncertain. I, too, am a Christian. My heart has never changed, though I have spoken fair words to the Saracen.'

"'Shall I then,' I answered, 'convey to Bohemond your promise, and tell him the means and time of its accomplishment?'

"Emir-Feir hesitated, and looked carefully about the little room which in the dim light seemed but a dungeon; then coming close to me, he replied:

"'Come to me again tomorrow night. The same messenger who brought you here will meet you at this hour in the grove near the old ruins of the temple of Apollo. I will then unfold a plan that with a few bold leaders will make the city yours;' and handling the purse of gold playfully, he added: 'Tis very pretty. It would not inconvenience you, perhaps, to bring another like it.'

"His dark eyes sparkled as I assured him of the pleasure his request would give the Duke, and opening the door, he unlocked the gate and I was again outside. There was no one in sight and keeping within the gloom of the tall trees that line the beautiful road from the city, I scarce noticed the distance, and on arriving at the camp I went at once to Bohemond and related everything that had occurred.

"Quite early this morning, before I had time to see you, the Duke sent for me. Raymond, Godfrey and Tancred were with him, and at his request I described to them all the circumstances of the previous night. When I had finished, Raymond and Godfrey both remained silent. Then Bohemond presented to them the seeming impossibility of successfully storming the city;

the danger that threatened from the vast numbers of Saracens that were already marching upon us; our necessity for securing food, and all the apparent dangers of our situation.

"'I am so certain,' he said, 'of the good faith of Emir-Feir that I, myself, will be the first to mount the walls. My own lords and knights will follow me. We will undertake every risk. Once inside, we will open the gates; then let the army enter and the city is ours. As I have found the means and will incur the peril, such as it may be, it is but just, when we are masters of Antioch, I should be its lord.'

"Godfrey and Tancred made no reply, but Raymond exclaimed with no little irritation:

"'We did not leave our homes and country for the exaltation of one above another. Have we not seen enough of personal ambition in the withdrawal of Baldwin to become prince of Edessa? Are we not all men and brothers? As for the rest of you, decide as you will. I did not raise the banner of the Crusade, and face these dangers to conquer new lordships and kingdoms for any one of us, nor am I fond of intrigue or bargains with traitors.'

"Bohemond looked at the others, all of whom remained silent, and the conference ended. When they were gone Bohemond looked after them, I fancied with something like a grim smile on his face, and muttered:

"'So they think—today.'

"Then turning to me he said: 'The way will appear for me to repay the service you are rendering me. Return again tonight as planned by Emir-Feir; take him the gold, and say we accept his offer and his reward shall exceed his hopes. Tell him it shall be within the week, and he shall learn in time of the hour.'

" 'But the chiefs,' I exclaimed.

"Smiling again, he replied: 'They will come to me.'

"Nearly all the afternoon he kept me with him, instructing me how to meet every issue Emir-Feir might raise, and before the setting of the sun I was once more on the way to the city. I found the Moslem guide in the grove as promised and we entered the gate as before. The renegade was delighted with the words, and as I thought more especially with the purse of Bohemond, and seemed anxious only to hasten the hour that his loyalty should be put to the test. In parting from me he said:

" 'I wish there were something in which I could show you favor for yourself alone.'

"I answered pleasantly, though I had little liking for the fellow, and thought nothing further of the matter. On returning, I received the word you had left, and could not sleep. The camp was still, and I walked back and forth, stopping a hundred times to listen for some sound till I heard the tread of horses and then saw your face. You were wiser than I. Guibert must live. His punishment will come, and the time and way will appear. My plan is this: Bohemond is sure the chiefs must yield to his design. If not, he will act alone. I know him. You say those we love are in the city. I will go again tomorrow night to Emir-Feir. His words of parting come back to me. I will ask him to find and describe the exact spot where they are concealed. We will tell Bohemond all, and ask him to set the very night for the assault on the city, that Guibert meets the Moslem chief on the mountain. When we are satisfied the traitor has gone we will hasten the move by an hour. Once inside the city, you and I, with Tancred and L'Enfans and a few other bold knights, will fly to the loved ones, and

rescue them before the city is fairly alarmed. When Guibert reaches the gates he will have enough to do to extricate himself from a situation whose peril he will not suspect till the very moment."

When Lacey concluded, his fingers worked nervously; his eyes sparkled with excitement, and his whole soul seemed to be on fire. Already he felt his arms around Minette, bearing her away from her heartless captors. With him, to think was to do, and he wasted no energy in dread of possible failure.

His companion had never once interrupted him. He had listened intently to every word, and was now weighing carefully, but with a beating heart, the bold chance conveyed in those closing words. Twice, he walked away a few steps and returned; then, stopping in front of Lacey, he exclaimed:

"It will do. We shall succeed; we must; but I have something further. We must see and talk with Louise and Minette before the night set for the execution of our bold plan, that they may understand and be ready; else, some unforeseen circumstance may intervene at the very moment."

"Yes; but how?" answered Lacey, his breath coming quickly.

"I have a plan, simple enough," le Bon replied. "It requires but courage and quick resource, qualities I think we know where to find. If the words of Emir-Feir are fairly said, he will show you favor, even at some risk. Let us seek his tower tomorrow night, soon as the darkness favors us. He will find such covering as will disguise our Crusaders' dress; a turban; we shall want little else. It were easy for him to teach us the way; perhaps himself guide us on the broad road near to the old Forum. It is all we shall need."

For a moment Lacey could not speak. A wave of emotion swept over him. Joy and hope struggled together for utterance and choked the way. Then, grasping the warm hand of his friend, he cried:

"You are my brother!"

"It is then settled," added le Bon, "for tomorrow night."

"Tomorrow night."

"Let us, then, seek some rest, for we shall need it, and the morning will soon dawn."

"Good night!"

"Good night!"

Early the following morning Lacey passed an hour with Bohemond, who, by no means insensible to the fate of the two girls, and delighted, moreover, with the romantic boldness of the young men, for the passion of knighthood was not yet dimmed by either his ambition or years, readily assented to the plan proposed, hazardous though it might be. During the day there were fresh alarms. From some quarter news was brought that an immense army, even greater than their own, was marching to the relief of the city. Many of the smaller chiefs assembled at the quarters of the Duke, and after much discussion, Godfrey and Raymond were sent for and the matter laid before them again. Both of these stubborn lords still objected. Then Bohemond exclaimed:

"I have unfolded to you my plan. The risk will be mine; the post of danger mine. There is peril on every side. It presses closely. We cannot remain here inactive. We must take the city or the Crusade fails. If either of you have a better way, in God's name, let it be known."

None could deny the force of his appeal. Still sullen

at his defeat, Raymond yielded, and the night was then set for the event so full of hazard. It was the night Guibert had planned to meet the Moslem chief at the mountain. He had been present at the conference; had listened with eager interest, and now that it was ended, he walked silently away, stunned at its result. Then he began to think. Plan after plan entered his busy brain and was turned away. If the Crusaders surprised and captured the city the captives would be restored. All his perfidy would be made known; his malignant purpose defeated; himself utterly lost. If he could but see and warn Bagi-Sijan; but the Moslem chief was far away; he knew not where, helping to swell the numbers that soon would have assailed the Crusaders; perhaps, and as he hoped, destroyed them all. Think and plan as he would, there appeared but one way. He must be at the place of meeting early. Perhaps Bagi, impatient too, might arrive before the hour. A moment would explain all. They would fly to the city and give the alarm. The Crusaders would wait for the darker hours. The renegade should be slain and a double guard placed upon the towers in his keeping; then, if all should fail, they could at least secure the captives and escape from the southern gates.

Strange! that in that busy hour, when the taunting whisper of demons seemed to be playing with his soul, he had forgotten one, through whom fate was to rule his mad passion as it would. He had forgotten Azzadin.

To Lacey and le Bon the day had passed slowly. Now that the bold plan they were about to attempt had the sanction of Bohemond, they were impatient with every hour's delay. Nervously they watched the sun, declining all too slowly toward the western horizon, but eager as they were, they were not unmindful of the extreme

hazard of the adventure, nor what tremendous consequences might hang on its result. They armed themselves with extra care, and at as early an hour as they dared, they parted with the Duke, who had even walked with them to the confines of the camp, and who pressed their hands affectionately, while he was speaking to them the few last words of advice.

In one short year these two young men had come to love each other as brothers. A tie bound them; a tie stronger, a thousand times, than the Crusade, and as they advanced cautiously toward the city, noting everything, even the dead leaves rustled by the wind, scarcely speaking, each knew and answered the thoughts of the other; thoughts unexpressed by words, yet flashing intelligence from soul to soul in unseen currents.

Darkness had covered the city early, for clouds obscured the sky and the moon had not yet risen. Emir-Feir would trust no other upon the tower. The risk was too great while the affair of such moment to him was still not fully determined, and he was quick to discover the silent figures approaching the walls. He was puzzled that there were two, and stood motionless, making no sign, until he recognized Lacey, who, advancing close to the lofty wall, spoke to him in a low voice. Hastily descending, the gate was opened, wide enough for both to enter, and closed again, and placing his finger to his lips, the renegade conducted the knights to the stone building, whose uninviting walls told no secrets. Here Lacey introduced his companion, and in a few words informed Emir-Feir that he bore him the compliments of the Duke, and the advice that the latter would appear before his towers on the night of the second of June, prepared to enter the city, and bestow

upon him the reward for the important service he was to render.

Emir-Feir listened with marked satisfaction, and when he had testified his approval and added a few words of advice as to the manner of approach, that no alarm might be given, he said:

"As soon as Bohemond reaches the walls, let his boldest knights mount upon the towers, which he will find unguarded, and descending within the city, open themselves the gates for the army to enter. Once inside," and here the renegade smiled, "Bohemond will scarce need further advice from me. It will be an easy victory, for the Moslem soldiers are few in numbers."

Lacey bowed his acknowledgment of the words; replying with the air of a true courtier that his grace would forget neither the gratitude nor the reward that would be due to Emir-Feir. Then he added:

"You were kind enough at our last interview to intimate a wish there were something in which you could favor me. Shall I seem bold in so soon reminding you of the words?"

"To serve you in anything within my power will but add to the honor with which your presence and words have invested me."

"I will be brief, then, for time presses," continued Lacey. "In the battle of Doryleum, two were stolen from us by Kilidge-Arslan. One is niece to Bohemond; the other of noble blood. Both were very dear to the knights who stand before you. The days and months that have passed have been years. These captives are in Antioch. Perhaps you may have heard of them, or better still, have seen them."

The face of Emir-Feir lighted up with quick intelligence.

"I have indeed seen them," he answered, "and if you would know of their safety, 'tis but slight favor you ask. Both are unharmed. I have seen them twice; once when they were brought here, and again while walking in the park outside the building in which they are confined, guarded by those who would pay with their lives for any mischance that might come to them. Both are very beautiful." Then, he added, musingly: "'Tis well they have not come within the glance of the Caliph."

For the moment Lacey was silent, struggling with an emotion he would have concealed, and le Bon exclaimed:

"We thank you, good Emir-Feir, for the intelligence that touches our hearts so kindly. But this is not all; there is more we would ask. I say we, for he who has remembered your words, whose faith has trusted the kindly import of your promise of favor, and I are one. The tenderness of love and the misery of grief have made us brothers."

The renegade looked at the young knight inquiringly and approaching a step nearer, le Bon added:

"We ourselves would see them."

Emir-Feir started, and his eyes opened wide with amazement.

"See them?" he cried.

"Aye, see, and speak to them."

"Impossible!"

"Impossible? Surely 'tis but a small matter compared to the taking of a city."

"But the peril, the risk even to our enterprise!"

Here Lacey interposed.

"Do not," he cried, "refuse us your aid. Show us the way. Guide us but to the spot, and leave us to accomplish the rest. Love risks everything. It must.

The night is dark. The city is quiet. There is no suspicion. Everything favors us; and if through some unhappy chance we are discovered, we are young, skillful and fleet of foot. We may escape and none will know whence we came. Bohemond knows and approves our adventure, and were we not wise as well as bold, think you he would have entrusted us with this mission to you; a mission fraught with consequences of such vast import to the Crusade?"

The face of Emir-Feir was a study. He could not understand the emotions that filled the souls of the young knights who sought his aid. His environments had been such as appeal only to the less noble qualities. Fear, dread and doubt were expressed upon his face. To him it appeared an adventure full of romantic folly, full of danger, certain to end in disaster, irretrievable, perhaps to himself; yet he hesitated to refuse. It was natural for him to believe Lacey had influence with Bohemond. His friendship might be of substantial value after the city was delivered to the Crusaders. For a full minute he walked across the stone floor while the two knights stood waiting with breathless impatience.

"'Tis a great risk," he muttered, "and if the city should be alarmed it makes the affair with the Crusaders more difficult; yet," he exclaimed, pausing and turning sharply toward them, "it may be done. Not tonight," he continued, noticing their quick movement and eager glance. "The darkness which would seem to conceal your purpose would prevent its execution. I have a plan. Each morning, if the day is fair, the captives are allowed to walk in the park. I have the governor's favor, and will obtain his order, which will admit us to the grounds. The way seems fair, and yet I have the greater peril in it, since if, by some overbold, unguarded

act of yours, some sudden cry, the involuntary exclamation of joy, or glad surprise by the captives, the plot should be discovered, there would be no escape. My death would be swifter than your own."

The two knights looked at each other questioningly. To their eager hearts the delay was a disappointment; yet they could not but admit to themselves that the words to which they had just listened were wise

Emir-Feir again walked across the floor nervously. At one moment his long fingers relaxed and his arms were partly raised; then his hands dropped to his side and were tightly clinched. He was carefully weighing the chances. Evidently the scale turned in favor of the young men, for, stopping suddenly, he exclaimed:

"Yes, it will do."

Going to the door, he looked carefully around. "Not a soul is nearer than the guard upon the fourth tower," he continued. "Come with me. It is but a few steps to where you may pass the night in safety, and in the morning I, myself, will so change your appearance that you will believe yourselves to be true Moslems."

Without a word the knights followed him. Turning toward the city, he led them silently to a small building near by, they had not previously noticed. Entering through a narrow passage and turning to the left, they found themselves in a small room, dimly lighted by a small, fibrous plant soaked in a basin of oil. At the farther end was a fireplace, around which a few blackened coals remained, though fire had scarcely been welcome for many weeks. Except a rude bed, some rough stools and a table on which rested the crude light, there was little else within.

"No one," continued Emir-Feir, "will know of your presence here except members of my own family. Re-

main as quiet as you can and do not go outside. I may not see you again before the morning breaks; for I have other duties, some of which relate to the success of this affair tomorrow. Do not be uneasy, nor doubtful of me. The die is cast, and Emir-Feir does not enter the Crusade with halting steps."

When he had left them, Lacey and le Bon looked carefully about the room. They could hear voices from what seemed to be an adjoining apartment. Other than this they heard nothing, save occasional noises from the street.

"The situation is certainly possible of fatal consequences," said Lacey, thoughtfully, "though I see nothing suspicious in it. If Emir-Feir means well in his promise to deliver the city, his own interest in that event would suffer in being false in this affair."

"Under any conditions," replied le Bon, "we could not escape extreme risk. Were there less at stake we should both enjoy the circumstances of such romance; chances that so appeal to the honor of knighthood; but in this, the fate of those so dear to us hangs upon our lives. I have watched Emir-Feir closely. There seems fair cause to trust him. The offer to aid us in taking the city was his own. There would be advantage, neither to him nor to the Moslems in the city, in treachery, save the loss of a few Crusaders' lives. His plan, too, is better than our own. I like its very boldness. We shall see them, warn them to be watchful and ready on the night we shall enter, for it must be quick work."

"I am glad your confidence equals my own," returned Lacey; "let us, then, seek some rest; we shall not fail tomorrow."

It was fully an hour after the sun had risen on the

following morning, before Emir-Feir entered the room. The knights had long since risen and were impatiently waiting him.

"I could not come earlier," he exclaimed, "though I knew you would be anxiously waiting me; but I have not been idle. I already have the order of the governor, and, better still, my nephew is one of the guards. His duty begins at the hour of ten, and it may chance to include the period of their walk. If so, he will be silent; yet there will be others near, and not a moment must be wasted in a word or look more than the intelligence you would convey. Let all be done quickly as possible. It is even better you should not trust to speech. Here is a small piece of bark I have brought for your purpose. It is from the cypress, and is soft. Write such words as you desire upon it, and, rolling it up, secrete it in your robe. This may be the safer means. A coal from yonder fireplace will be all you need. In a little time I will return with your morning meal."

Searching among the coals, Lacey selected the softest he could find, and smoothing the little piece of bark, wrote upon it the few words that would mean so much to those two aching hearts so near and yet unconscious of their presence.

CHAPTER XXIII

"ON THE FIFTH NIGHT, DO NOT SLEEP"

ALMOST a year had passed since the battle of Doryleum. The seasons had come and gone and were coming again; the summer with its gentle dews sparkling in the morning sunlight, and its flowers; and the winter, with its shivering storms; but neither the harvest of gold, nor the dead leaves had wrought any change in the grief, misery and constant fear of some greater horror; tortures that through all the long days and months had cruelly torn those loving souls, that, hidden upon the mountain's crest, clung to each other in hopeless despair, while the bravest knights of the Crusade sought them in vain. Each day had brought its incidents as they were borne along in their rude cart or carried on litters over narrow mountain passes. Once in passing through a Moslem village, rude hands were laid upon them, and punishment of the outrage followed so swiftly, that, shuddering, they wondered. One eye was ever watchful of their safety; one hand ever guarded and shielded them. One voice sometimes spoke to them in French, and not unkindly; and yet Minette trembled with some strange fear at its sound. Hearing but the discord of an unknown tongue, the words would have been as a ray of

sunshine coming from a rift in the clouds, except that in the gleaming eye of the speaker she saw the lightning above the clouds.

And there had not been wanting days when hope came. They knew they were not forgotten, and that stout hearts would seek them. There were hours, when alone, they talked of their love, and as they talked the way grew smoother and the days more sunny. And the hope that came built castles, beneath whose tall pillars grief and fear were for the time buried. Never for a moment had Minette forgotten her enthusiasm for the Crusade, and little as she believed it the will of God, Louise now prayed for its success. Eagerly they scanned the horizon for the sea of white banners, turning from the gaze, to look only upon the dark faces around them. Gladly would they have welcomed another battle, and escaping in its storm, have felt the blow of the sharp iron rather than endure that unknown dread, which even in these softer moments never left them.

It was early in April when they arrived at a broad river. For many days something unusual attracted the attention of the captives. From the east, horsemen, sometimes singly and sometimes in groups, were continually arriving. Each of them sought Kilidge-Arslan and then returned again; always toward the east. At the river, Bagi appeared. Then Azzadin, with a small company of Moslems, conducted them across the stream, careful of their safety. All the following day they rode rapidly toward the southwest. At night they turned abruptly to the north, and soon reached the walls of a great city. One of its southern gates opened to them, and Azzadin told them they were in Antioch.

Passing parks and palaces, from the windows of which

faint lights were streaming, they soon entered a more populous part of the city, where crowds were passing, and curious eyes were turned upon them. Farther along they stopped at a building whose Greek columns told the story of its antiquity. From the house a Moslem appeared; evidently one in authority. Seeing the captives, he ordered them carried within. Leaping from his horse, Azzadin exclaimed:

"It cannot be. I am responsible for their safety. They must remain in my charge."

"Impossible," angrily replied the officer; "the Governor has ordered."

"Then the Governor shall recall his order," retorted Azzadin; and, approaching closer, he exclaimed in lower tones:

"Beware! I am master in this affair, and have that with me the Governor dare not disobey. Conduct me to him at once."

The cruel eyes of the officer, which a moment before had been fixed on the captives, with a look that made their hearts beat like that of the bird which flutters just within the grasp of the pitiless hawk, blazed with anger, and then as quickly faded as he met a glance more cruel, more deadly than his own. It was indeed the glance of the master.

"Have it as you will, then," he cried; "but have a care. The Governor does not like contradiction, and you will be lucky if he does not order you thrown from the highest tower into the moat."

All the while the two unhappy ones looked upon the scene with breathless interest. The words were strange, but they understood. Intuition aided their quickened senses, and now that she did not see his eyes, Minette forgot for the moment her fear of Azzadin, and felt

something in her heart drawing her closer to him. It was the feeling of the lamb that is sheltered.

Like a cur, who would hide himself away before a more powerful brute, the officer led the way into the building. The Governor looked up impatiently, and glanced inquiringly at the officer, who was about to speak when Azzadin interrupted him:

"I am in charge, most noble Baghisian," he exclaimed, "of the captives, of whose coming you have already been notified."

"You are relieved of further care and may retire; I have already ordered their disposal," replied the Governor.

"Then you will recall your commands," returned Azzadin.

White with rage, Baghisian rose to his feet, and a score of nobles and guards, who were in the room, drew their weapons and were about to spring upon the bold Moslem.

Cold and motionless as the stone pillars in the room, Azzadin continued:

"Pardon me; the captives are not yours. One greater than yourself has instructed me. Myself and every man in my command will die ere harm comes to them. Know you this sign?" he added, taking something from his bosom and holding it before the eyes of the astonished Governor.

Baghisian started, and turning away, walked the floor, muttering angrily. Then, stopping suddenly, his manner changed and he exclaimed:

"Every servant of the Caliph knows the sign," and, placing his hand upon the arm of one who stood near him, he added:

"Good Cadoza, he who stands before you is Azzadin,

our honored guest. Conduct him to the palace of Mahadin. Let guards be stationed, and allow no one to enter the park outside the palace walls without my order. Forget my words, worthy Azzadin; I know thee better now."

For many weeks Minette and Louise had been safely guarded within the palace of Mahadin. There was little need of those who watched them even as they walked among the flowers of the park, except for their own protection from those impassioned brutes, who would have destroyed the loveliness even as they hated the sweet gentleness of those Christian souls. Left to themselves, escape from the closely guarded gates that at intervals opened invitingly from the high walls that encircled the city, would have been impossible. The situation was, at least, a momentary relief from their condition of captivity among the rude chiefs and ruder followers of Kilidge-Arslan.

The attitude of Azzadin puzzled them. Sometimes he would disappear for many days, and then, returning, would startle them by his sudden presence. Something in his glance as he looked upon the sweet face of Minette, always filled her with alarm; and yet, except in the flash of his dark eyes, his features were as expressionless as one of the columns, which many centuries before had supported the statue of Constantine in the park through which they walked. He spoke but little and his mouth never broadened into a smile. There were times when his whole nature seemed about to change, when in passionate words he would speak the thoughts that were struggling within, and then, he would as quickly turn away, muttering:

"Not yet; all is moving to my will. I can wait."

In the darkest night, when heavy clouds bank against

the sky, increasing the obscurity, a chance wind separates, for the moment, the gloomy masses, and through the rift a star glimmers. It happened one day as they were taking their usual walk, in the absence of Azzadin, one of the Moslem guards, a man of cheerful nature, spoke to them in French. Encouraging the soldier, who thought little of the matter, they learned that just beyond the rich plain that skirted the city on the north, the Crusaders were camped. The intelligence was indeed a star; the star of hope; first of all that had beamed upon them from Syrian skies. Its loving rays entered their souls, and staid there.

That evening they talked long and earnestly together. So near! Walls of stone could not separate the hearts that loved! They held each other's hands while the soft night gently wrapped its mantle around them.

"Father! Lacey! I shall see them again!" exclaimed Minette. Then she added:

"Forgive me, dear Louise, I am very selfish to speak of Lacey. It is I who have brought upon you all this misery, and you have none to whom your heart clings in love such as mine."

There was brief silence, and then Minette felt the hand of her companion tremble as Louise replied:

"I have never told you, dear, that long ago, before we left beautiful Taranto, Tancred asked me to be his wife."

"Tancred? And you love him? I am so glad."

There was no reply. Louise kissed the lips that were suddenly pressed to her own, and obeying an uncontrollable impulse she arose, and going to the window, looked out into the night. Then, from the mountain, miles away, came the soul that touched her own, illuminating it with an ecstasy of joy. Brighter than

the stars that smiled and beamed upon her were the eyes that looked out upon the sky, and in that moment were crowded years of divine love, of comfort, of peace; of affection, too sacred for words.

Turning hastily to Minette she cried:

"We are not forgotten! They know we are here! They are coming! Something will happen, soon!"

And something did happen.

Two days had passed since the occurrence of the scene just described. On the morning of the third the two girls were walking in the park as usual. The soldier on duty seemed to pay little attention. He was the same who had spoken to them, knowing, perhaps, little of the meaning his words conveyed to their sensitive hearts. They were talking of the Crusaders so near, and their own rescue almost with the certainty of children, and were so interested in their conversation they did not notice that strangers had entered the park, until they had approached very near. Observing them suddenly, the girls were startled. Except Azzadin, they had never before seen any one within the grounds but the guards and those who lived in the palace and whose faces were familiar. There were three of them, and one stopped to talk with the soldier. The other two continued their walk toward them. They seemed to be old men, though their elastic step was little in accord with the bent and stooping shoulders.

"We appear to attract their curiosity," remarked Louise, noticing the glances of the old men, who were now about to pass them so closely that, involuntarily, she stepped half a pace backward, adding:

"What eyes these Moslems have!"

Minette did not answer, nor did she move. She was looking at one of the men. Something she saw im-

pressed her strangely. It was a little thing; only a flower, a violet, fastened to his turban.

Louise felt the delicate fingers tightening within her own hand. The old men were now directly opposite, so near they could have almost touched them. Then, as by a sudden impulse, the bent form of him who wore the soft flower upon his turban straightened and towered above the other, and from his face, half turned, two eyes, that sparkled and beamed with love and courage, looked full into those of Minette, who stood fascinated, her face white as the mountain snow, immovable, silent as a statue.

The twin violet had found its mate.

'Twas but an instant. His companion touched his arm, warningly, and the tall form was again bent, the shoulders once more stooping, and the old men passed on, now apparently viewing some flowering bush or tall tree, and again gazing with seeming interest upon the time-worn ruins of some noble structure destroyed in the vindictive rage of Chosroes and his Persian army centuries before.

Turning to Louise, Minette exclaimed:

"Saw you the flower? Do Turks wear such ornaments?" Then, taking a little packet from her bosom and opening it, she continued: "Long ago; oh! how long it seems, I found among the flowers at Touraine, a stem on which two violets blossomed. Cutting them carefully apart, one I sent to Lacey. Here is the other."

The two looked at each other silently. It was a glance in which no words were needed. Then Louise hastily whispered:

"They are returning. Let us move forward to the spreading branches of yonder tree, whose thick foliage will shield us from watchful eyes as they pass again."

Moving slowly, and looking carefully about, the old men were again walking toward them. What would they do? Dare they speak? What boldness to come alone into the very midst of their enemies! What love prompted it! These were the thoughts of Louise; for quickly as the violet had told its story to Minette, her heart had discovered the one whose warning hand had touched the arm of his companion. What disguise could conceal the lips that had spoken such noble words on the boat at Rodosto, or the eyes whose brilliancy told of the intensity of his love as he pictured the "eagle floating above the mountain crests," the morning they had met Peter. One glance into those eyes, and like a flash there came back to her memory the words he had uttered:

"No mishap can overtake him who hesitates not in duty." In that one moment she forgot the Crusade, forgot Tancred, forgot her captivity, and all the misery of that long year, and lived that one instant in the fullness of an all-absorbing impulse to cling to that stooping figure that wore the turban and robe of the hated Turk. And yet she stood there still as the shadow of the great tree beyond and listened to the words of Minette, and all the time her eyes wandered over the park, fearful, not for herself, not for Minette, but for the one she now knew she loved better than her own life.

Nor were the thought and memories of Minette less active. Both were keenly alert; both realized the peril though they did not yet understand the purpose of the disguised knights. Nothing in the little park escaped their notice, and yet their eyes never seemed to leave the two, who, approaching with still slower steps, were again almost beside them. At the northern end of the

park Emir-Feir watched them all nervously. Another step; another moment of intense emotion; a moment on which life seems to hang, and four faces are turned to each other. Eyes meet; eyes that know and speak. Four hearts stop their beating; four souls have met. Minette sees only Lacey, who nearest the two girls is about to speak. His lips are already parted, but words do not come; for in that moment, fate trifles with hearts that are brave and hearts that suffer. Some one has entered the park and is already questioning the guard. The unwelcome intruder looks sharply at Emir-Feir. He does not know him, but sees from his dress that he is an officer. Emir-Feir would detain him, but he does not listen. Breathless the two girls exclaim, scarcely above a whisper:

"It is Azzadin!"

And while he walks rapidly toward them, not a muscle of the knights' faces moves. They look upon the captives as though but to satisfy curious eyes, for such a sight was rare in Antioch; then, turning, they continue their walk, slowly, still bent and stooping; but as they turn away Lacey drops something he has had concealed within his hand. Quickly stooping to gather a flower, Minette secures it and conceals it in her dress as she innocently holds up the delicate blossom that Louise may enjoy its fragrance.

The knights pass Azzadin with measured step. He stops and seems about to follow and speak to them; then changes his mind and mutters, as he turns again toward the captives:

"I have seen those eyes before—but where?"

Whatever thoughts might have chased each other backward through the months that were past, till they found the answer to his question in the wineroom

at Constantinople on the night of that fierce conflict, were dissipated by something almost like a smile on the face of Minette, who greeted him kindly, asking him of Antioch, and if the tales she had heard of its beauty and wealth were true. And she made him tell her the story of the ruins in the park, and of the Grove of Daphne, holding him, thus delighted, till the changing shadow of the tree told her that more than an hour had passed since she had seen the knights leave the park. Then she pleaded fatigue, and taking the arm of Louise asked his permission to retire, while her beautiful eyes, more powerful than knights' lances held him the captive.

> And well she knew
> That those persuasive eyes, that winning smile
> In which the Moslem's passion, tempted, grew,
> Trifled with danger, all the while.

Little did he know the motive those brilliant eyes and that winning smile concealed; nor did he suspect, that in the impatience of Minette to know the secret that lay in the token Lacey had dropped, she lived a day in every moment, and when the two girls disappeared within the building, the hard lines of his unreadable face relaxed into a smile. Some thought, strange to it, stirs that cold heart. Suddenly the old look returns. He remembers the old men. Where had he seen those faces? He starts; then thinking a moment steadily, while the color deepens upon his face and fades away again, he mutters:

"No! it cannot be! impossible!"

The thought that has disturbed him passes away. The softer look comes back into his eyes, and he exclaims, as though he were whispering a contradiction to his soul:

"And after all, why should she not grow to love me? The past is buried; she cannot hope to escape. It was not I who bore her away. She thinks me her protector, and a woman's heart easily turns to him who is kind and gentle. He must be bold, too. I must be patient. Let Guibert do the work with Lacey. It must not be my hand. I will save her from the traitor's grasp. If she wills I will even wear the cross. Then—she must —she shall be mine!"

As soon as the two girls were alone, Minette took from her dress the little roll that Lacey had dropped. Impatient as both were to know its meaning, she could not resist the happiness of holding it a moment in her hand that she might feel the magnetism of his touch. In that moment her hand clasped his own. Then as she unrolled it, there were two hearts that beat nervously, two faces that in eager expectancy, touched each other tenderly, and eyes, from whose earnest gaze no sign could escape. It was but a bit of palm scarce longer than her hand, but on the dried leaf, written evidently with a blackened coal or charred stick, in coarse, uneven letters, were the words:

"On the fifth night do not sleep."

The bright sunlight played about the room, as silently the two pressed each other's hands; they understood all the meaning that lay within the irregular words rudely traced on that bit of palm, and neither heart doubted as they counted the nights.

Many minutes passed, in which no words were spoken. Thoughts were too busy; perhaps some too sacred. Then, turning to her companion, Minette exclaimed, as though communing with herself:

"How noble he is! how bold! He braves peril from which other hearts would shrink; and to save me, beards

the Moslem in his very home, while I—I can do nothing but love him. Dear Louise, I sometimes think that only those whose courage dares, those who accomplish great and worthy deeds, may find heaven."

"True," replied Louise, "Lacey has all those noble qualities; but, 'twas God who so invested him. He but uses them. And is not the love He has woven into your own heart, something as great? Is it not even greater? Would the tall tree have reached its noble stature had not the loving sunshine smiled upon the shrub? Did not our whole Christian church, with its broadening influences, which, in spite of the passion and wrong that environ it, is moving with sure steps toward a grander civilization, spring from one loving soul? It is in your love that Lacey has grown. But do you not forget there was another with him?"

"Forgive me, dear Louise. I saw but him. Strange! The other could not be Tancred; he is much taller! And yet, what other?"

"It was not Tancred; it was—Monsieur le Bon."

"Le Bon! Ah! Louise, I wish it were him you loved."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE CRUSADERS ENTER ANTIOCH

IT was late in the afternoon when the two knights returned to the Crusaders' camp. Aided by Emir-Feir, in whose company they were little noticed, they were relieved of the turbans and Moslem robes, at the little building near the tower, and once more in their Crusader's dress, the gate was opened when none but the family of their recent companion was near, and, walking rapidly, they were soon beyond the range of unfriendly eyes.

Bohemond was glad enough to see them, for he had been seriously alarmed at their prolonged absence. He listened to their story with great interest, scarcely speaking till they had concluded, when he exclaimed:

"Emir-Feir, then, means well, and whether his motive be for profit to himself alone, or whether, his desire satisfied, there may be, too, some thought in his heart, that greed were pardoned if the Christian faith were restored in Antioch, it matters little. And is the hour settled? Does he fully understand it is to be on the night of the second?"

"Yes, everything is arranged, even to the hour," replied Lacey.

The Duke arose, and, walking a few moments back and forth, continued thoughtfully: "Raymond is still

cold, and Godfrey hath little interest in the matter. 'Tis but jealousy. Well, some one must rule in Antioch. They cannot hold aloof; and if they do——"

"We shall not need them," cried both the knights. "The task will be easy. We two will first mount upon the walls, and when we have opened the gates, 'tis but a bold rush."

Bohemond ceased his walk, and looking upon those brave young faces, a smile, such as may come from inspiration, rested upon his face.

"It cannot be," he answered, gently. "Tancred and I have already quarreled about that. You heard my words to Raymond. I, alone, must be the first to mount. But you shall follow, and for the rest, I need say no more. Your horses will be at the gate. Tancred will ride with you. Take that bold fellow, L'Enfans; he is a whole troop in himself; and such others as you will, and God speed you."

To Lacey and le Bon the following days passed slowly; each passing hour mocked their impatience, and they welcomed, alike, the rose tints of the morning and the shadows of night. But there was one in that vast Crusaders' camp more impatient than they; one whose uneasy soul found no rest. To Guibert it seemed a hair might turn the scale. On the one hand was the approaching culmination of his brutal plans; on the other, speedy and irretrievable ruin. His feverish brain gave him no rest. Once, by accident he met Lacey, and his guilty eyes turned aside from the steady gaze of the man he would have killed.

Each day increased the confidence of the Crusaders in the design of Bohemond. Fresh alarms were being continually brought by Christians, who, under the iron heel of the Moslem, had nourished their faith in secret, and

it was now certain that Corbogha, with an army as great as their own, was rapidly nearing them. One by one, all the smaller chiefs earnestly pledged their support to Bohemond; nor did Godfrey and Raymond longer oppose his design.

The night of the second of June had at last arrived, and all was in readiness for the attack. Nothing had been forgotten, nothing omitted for carrying out successfully the plan arranged with Emir-Feir, and if he should prove false, ladders were ready for scaling and forcing the walls. Early in the evening, Guibert had secretly, as he supposed, departed toward the distant mountain, where he was to meet Bagi-Sijan. There were two, however, who watched his every movement, well knowing the hour at which he was to meet the Moslem chief. Such was his nervous impatience that, once out of sight of the Crusaders, he urged his horse into a furious pace, though he well knew, that even at an ordinary gait, he must arrive at the appointed spot long before the hour. His feverish brain gave him no rest, and as the darkness gathered about him, strange and unwelcome pictures floated before his imagination. Reaching the mountain, he leaped from his foaming horse, and walked aimlessly back and forth. He knew it was not yet time, and yet he wondered the chief did not arrive. Alone, the place had a weird look, and he was startled by a rushing sound that made him shiver. 'Twas but an ill-shapen bird of the night that flew by croaking. Then the hour came and passed; the hour when Bagi had promised to be there, and not a sound broke the stillness. It seemed to him that insect and bird and every living thing, were, in like humor as himself, listening in disappointed expectancy. His horse, rested from his hard gallop, rubbed his nose companionably against his

shoulder. He sprang away at the touch; then struck the animal angrily. Perspiration gathered upon his hands; yet they were cold. The loud beating of his own heart frightened him, and he had a strange desire to fly, he knew not whither. Long after the appointed time, how long he knew not, for in his frenzy he took no account of the moments as they passed, he heard faint sounds; then a low rumbling. It deepened, and growing more distinct, he recognized the quick, steady beat of hoofs. Angry at himself, he sprang upon his horse and hurried forward. It was Bagi at last; and when the chief began to explain his delay, he cut short the half-spoken words:

"Waste not a moment," he cried. "Antioch is betrayed. Already the Crusaders are at the gates. Emir-Feir, who guards a tower, hath received the gold of Bohemond."

Bagi-Sijan made no reply. It was not a time for words; but like the fierce wind that sweeps around the sharp side of the mountain, the Moslem band turned, and fled down the narrow slope; fled over the plain, nor spared the tired horses, in their desperate attempt to reach the northern gate.

Too late, Bagi-Sijan! The speed of the noble animal you ride will not avail. Too late, Guibert! This night the purpose of your mad passion fails. Already the city's fate is sealed.

The crimson glow had scarcely disappeared from the western sky, out of whose leaden arch a star shone dimly, when the Crusaders with little noise began the march. Softly the evening shadows were covering the way before them. Foremost of all was the army of Bohemond —the Duke leading, with Tancred by his side. Close behind him were Lacey, le Bon and L'Enfans. Very quietly they marched in the gathering gloom. The dim

star grew brighter and one by one others came, and covering the sky twinkled through the leaves of the trees in the beautiful groves through which they were passing. Scarcely a word was spoken, for everything had been carefully planned, and except the slow tread of the horses, and the lighter footsteps of the men upon the soft soil, there was no sound.

An hour passed; another, and a third. Then out of the darkness rose the walls of the city, and close at hand, loftier than the walls, was the tower of Emir-Feir. In the silence of their approach only his watchful eye had noticed. No suspicion was aroused; Antioch was asleep.

On the tower is a solitary figure. It beckons them. Quietly the knights dismount. Raymond has now arrived. He looks uneasily at the figure and the unmanned wall. There is suspicion in the very silence. He whispers to Bohemond, who makes no answer. If there is doubt in his heart, his lips will not betray it. If there is danger, his arm will be first to meet it. A ladder is brought and placed against the tower. The figure at the top seizes and holds it firmly; then beckons again. Without a moment's hesitation, Bohemond grasps the ladder, and begins the perilous ascent. Four bold knights follow him closely. Over that vast sea of crosses there is a low, suppressed murmur. A hundred thousand hearts are bursting with desire to cheer the brave Duke. Half the dizzy height is already reached. The murmur ceases, and the waiting army gazes in deathly silence. What fate hangs over those clinging forms? Step over step, steadily, without pause or rest, Bohemond mounts. He is at the top. The figure that has stood all the time motionless assists him upon the wall. The four knights quickly follow, and all disappear. Expectant, yet fearful,

the Crusaders wait, scarcely breathing. A minute; then the gate opens, and Bohemond stands within, his sword already drawn.

Behind him were the four knights, who passed quickly through the gate, and, leaping upon their horses, the noble animals sprang forward into the city. A hundred knights followed them, straight as the bird flies, toward the center of the town. Foremost of all, were Lacey and le Bon. There were sharper lines on their faces than had ever marked them before. To them, at that moment, the fate of Antioch was nothing; the Crusade was nothing. One thought alone filled their souls, and there was nothing further.

On their right, at the side of le Bon, Tancred rode. In striking contrast to the pale faced young man beside him, his face was flushed, for with him pride was inseparable from love; and yet, his love for Louise was the one noble emotion, that, in all the years that had passed, had taken possession of his heart. Woe to the unhappy Moslem that shall come within reach of his sword!

L'Enfans was close to Lacey. Bold and perilous ventures were his delight. He loved the young knight, too, and there was that in the daring boldness of their mad rush into the very faces of the foe that warmed his blood.

Already the gate they had entered was far behind, but the city was no longer silent. Startled faces peered from the windows of the palaces they passed. Strangely curious eyes, that an hour before had been closed in peaceful slumber, gazed into the darkness, nor yet knew the cloud of knights who disappeared like dimly outlined spectres, vanishing before the wind, was but the first puff of a mighty volcano, whose destructive fires were about to burst upon them. Here and there Turkish

soldiers were gathering—guards, who should have been more watchful—sometimes in little groups and sometimes in larger companies. Across the broad street in the center of the city, the street that led from the eastern to the western gate, a human wall of Moslems blocked the way of the flying knights. Their arms gleam in the darkness. Every leap of the horses brings the knights nearer. No rein is checked. One more intense moment, and the thundering horses strike this living wall. Through and over it the knights plunge, leaving a great gap, and, as they pass, Tancred strikes a score of blows, and the long lance of L'Enfans is reddened more than once with blood. Under the horses' feet are the dying and the crushed. Lacey and le Bon do not look behind. They have struck no blows. They care not what is passing around them. Their eyes are strained, for they know that the little park, and the building where the loved ones are waiting, cannot be far away.

And now, scarcely a hundred yards away, they see a host of Moslems, waiting at the very edge of the park. The numbers are appalling. Just beyond is the building. Perhaps two frightened faces from within are looking hopelessly upon the scene, and in that possible thought, the muscles of the knights, their nerves, their hearts become iron. They shall see what men can do!

Without a halt, without a moment's check in their furious gait, the knights strike that great host as they struck the crowded line in the broad street, and in that awful plunge they have torn half way through the now surging, struggling mass. All around them are screams of pain, and cries of rage and hate. In that one instant they look upon a sea of dark faces, and eyes that gleam with passion meet their own fearless gaze. Now, for the first time, the swords of Lacey and le Bon begin

their terrible work. Around their steel blades, the lightning's swift glare plays in deadly flashes. The tall figure of Tancred bends as he strikes, and he laughs as the Moslems fall beneath his weapon. L'Enfans was in his glory. Sitting upon his horse like a veritable giant, Turk after Turk fell beneath the strokes of his long lance, and when it was finally broken, the sweep of his heavy sword was no less deadly. The odds against the knights in numbers were frightful, but theirs was a battle of souls, and souls won. Steadily the knights had fought, foot by foot, through the raging crowd. In all that dreadful scene the four leaders seemed to have a charmed life. All around and under their horses the dead and dying lay in heaps. The Moslems could not endure such determined courage. A panic seized them and they fled, each caring only to save himself. Again the knights sped forward and another moment they were at the building, with no living soul in sight to dispute their entrance.

At the northern wall of the city another scene was passing. No sooner had the knights departed on their brave mission of love than the Crusaders began entering the gate. Very quietly they swept along the northern wall. Some of the guards fled at their approach; others were killed. At every gate, from the iron bridge to the western wall, a stream of Crusaders was pouring in. A hundred thousand were already within the doomed city when the silence was broken. Cheers rent the air, and from every throat was shouted the battle cry,

"God willeth it!"

All over the city the alarm was sounded, and Antioch awoke, trembling with fear and rage.

Far away to the northwest, down the sloping sides of the mountain, over the wooded hills, through forest

and grove, and across the wide plain, a score of Moslem horsemen are flying swiftly as the company of knights that sped across the city. Nearly an hour had passed, and still the iron points on the heels of the riders are pressed against the sides of the foaming horses. At the head of the fierce band is Guibert and the Moslem chief. In the miles that have passed neither has spoken. Each has his own thought. Neither has abandoned hope. Bagi may yet be in time to save the city; Guibert to save himself. The face of the latter is darker than that of the Moslem. A tormenting fear, struggling with hope, stifles him. His imagination paints a picture, possibly real. The scene maddens him. Something startles him, and at the instant Bagi seizes his rein and pulls so stoutly upon his own horse that the animals plough great furrows in the ground in their sudden stop. Looking quickly Guibert sees a great wall outlined against the sky. Outside in the darkness are moving forms; then the whole space, so far as he can see in the darkness, seems to be alive. He does not need to be told they are the Crusaders. He can hear the distant murmur. How long they have been there, what they are doing, if any have yet entered the gates, he does not know.

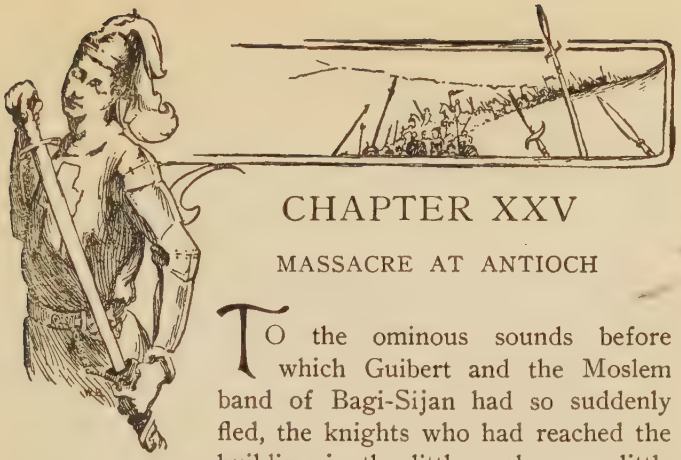
'Twas but a moment's glance; then the Moslem chief, still holding the rein that rests loosely in Guibert's hand, turns sharply to the right and they fly toward the west. Happily for them they had not been seen. Skirting the towers that guard the angle of the wall, they breathe more freely. They can no longer see the moving forms, nor hear the murmur. At the middle gate on the western side was a guard, the first they had seen. He seemed frightened, but at a word from Bagi descended from the tower and opened the gate. He spoke nervously.

What had happened, what danger threatened, he did not know. He had seen soldiers and guards flying from the northern wall into the city, and had heard strange noises.

In the fierce gallop Guibert's boldness had returned, and he would have dashed forward at once. That Antioch would fall he did not doubt, but there might yet be time to seize and bear Minette away. It was a desperate chance. For one moment, however, the Moslem chief hesitated. Escape were then easy; and yet the city might still be saved. 'Twere cowardly to fly. Then, too, like L'Enfans, his bold heart loved danger, loved it as he hated the Crusade, and turning again to Guibert he exclaimed:

"Have your own way, then," and pressing the cruel points into his horse till the noble animal snorted with pain, the score of Moslems flew through the gate, down the broad road that led through the center of the city. Street after street was passed, park and palace and homes of the poor were left behind, and still their furious pace continued. Now there are others in the street, and with each leap of their horses the numbers are swelling. Their speed slackens as the crowd increases; in front the whole road is blocked. Lances and swords are glistening in the darkness. Now they hear a sound like the low growling of wild animals. Looking forward, they suddenly stop. Something they see, that sends the blood to their hearts. 'Tis the rushing of the knights. They see them strike the line in front; see them pass through and over it. The low growling murmur ceases, and they hear the cries of pain from those who lie crushed and dying in the great gap. Fascinated, they move slowly forward, their eyes still upon the knights, whose speed has not been checked. Just beyond a

greater crowd of Turks is angrily waiting. The knights urge their horses to still greater speed. They strike the maddened host and seem to lift it into the air. The face of Guibert is pale with rage. In the darkness he has seen and recognized Lacey. Then the terrible conflict begins. He sees the long swords flashing, the swords of the knights. The very air seems in flames. A few minutes of awful slaughter, minutes that seemed to him hours, and the Moslems fly. The knights are at the building. Minette is there, and all is lost. From the distant wall he hears now the appalling battle cry. There is no hope, no mercy in the sound. All around him are faces of terror; then struck with sudden fear, he turns to Bagi, and pushing their way through the crowd they fly to the southern gate.



CHAPTER XXV

MASSACRE AT ANTIOCH

TO the ominous sounds before which Guibert and the Moslem band of Bagi-Sijan had so suddenly fled, the knights who had reached the building in the little park, gave little heed. It is doubtful if they even heard; nor did they know what was passing around them. The four bold leaders quickly leaped from their horses. Lacey and le Bon were first to enter. They had but one thought, and in that thought, duty to the Crusade, the Crusade, itself, was forgotten. With no less noble purpose, no less lofty courage, no less devoted love, Tancred forced his way to their side. He did not know of the love that shone in the earnest eyes of the young knight beside him. Within his soul was the one burning passion: to strike down a score of hated Turks, eclipsing in that mighty deed every former glory of his life, and snatching Louise from a scene of deadly peril, hold her to his heart in an ecstasy of love.

Quite different was the spirit that stirred the bosom of le Bon. In his love there was nothing of self. Mighty deeds he would dare and do for her. He would die, even, at her feet, if he could but see her restored to safety; nor hope for greater joy than that the last glance of his closing eyes might rest on her loved face.

Not a moment was lost in idle questioning. It was

not a time for words. They knew not what frightful danger might be hanging over the long suffering captives, and rushing forward, they began the search through that great building. Room after room was entered and deserted, without a visible sign of human life. In many of the rooms lights were still burning, and in some the doors were open, as though they had been left in haste. In a large room on one of the floors above, a table was overturned, and some seats. On a small stand by one of the windows were some flowers in a richly ornamented vase. Something about them attracted Lacey, and walking to the window he touched them with his hand, softly as he would have touched the face of Minette. A delicate blossom, whose life was broken in the shadow of its confinement, fell from his gentle fingers. He tried to pick up the dying leaf, and among the colored blossoms his hand touched something concealed. It was a bit of palm. The upper part was broken off, and holding it before the light, he read the words his own hand had rudely traced:

"Do not sleep."

There was a story in the words, and a sad one, and as he looked at them in a despairing, hopeless way, the nerves which a moment before had been shreds of steel, were limp as those of a tender babe. His companion read them silently; no others were in the room.

Great and noble as was the love of Lacey, that of le Bon was even greater, for it was without hope of reward. Since the first opening of the bud whose delicate and fragrant flowers had blossomed in his heart, it had lived on itself. To restore Louise to safety and freedom; to see the blush of happiness on her cheek; to hear again the music of her voice, even though it chided him as on the ship at Rodosto, was his one thought; a dream. He

would ask for nothing more. And it was he whose voice first broke the silence. Placing his hand on Lacey's arm, and pointing to the little piece of palm, he said:

"She who placed it among the flowers has not lost hope."

Words of inspiration! words that seemed to have come from Minette herself!

"Nor will we sleep," cried Lacey. "They cannot be far away. Our flight was too rapid. Let us search further. They may be concealed somewhere in the building."

Long and patiently, but each moment with fading hope, they searched. In every room and passage, every spacious hall and dark recess, their anxious eyes caught each shadow. Secret places they found, and long corridors, and niches in the walls; alcoves, too, but in them all no living thing greeted them; nor was there a sound save their own voices and the noise made by the other searchers.

They entered again the large room where the table and seats were overturned. Tancred and L'Enfans were there. Both were earnestly surveying the scene. Others of the knights who had been aiding in the search came, and looked about curiously. Mechanically, L'Enfans turned toward the steps that led to the floor below. Descending slowly he found a narrow passage at the end of which was a door, half opened, opposite the one they had entered. Outside, a few steps beyond the door, a vine crept along the building. Some movement among the leaves attracted him, and pulling aside the delicate tendrils, he saw a human form crouching closely to the wall, and a frightened, pleading face, the face of a Moslem, looked up at him. Seizing the figure, L'Enfans pulled the man forth and into the building.

The Moslem extended his arms imploringly to Lacey, who with le Bon and Tancred, had just reached the door. Furious with rage, Tancred was about to spring upon him, when Lacey caught his arm and cried:

"Do not harm him. I know the man. He was a guard here, and is kin to Emir-Feir."

Then turning to the Moslem, and speaking kindly, he said:

"Tell us of the captives, and speak quickly. Where are they hidden?"

"They are not concealed," he answered; "would it were so! My hand would but too willingly point out the spot. Even while you were fighting yonder, Azzadin, with a dozen men, tore them from the building. I heard the struggle in the room above, for the girls resisted. Then I saw them carried down the steps, and outside, two powerful Moslems held them upon their horses. Azzadin led their flight toward the south, and long since they have escaped from the city."

All the while he was speaking L'Enfans walked back and forth like a chained mastiff.

White with passion and grief Tancred cried:

"And why did you not fly to us when you saw them escaping?"

"You were still fighting. 'Twere death, before I could speak, to have come within reach of your swords."

"Cowardly dog!" replied Tancred. Then he exclaimed quickly:

"They have scarce a half hour's start; we may overtake them! 'Tis not impossible! And yet, we know not what direction they took when they left the gate. No! 'tis useless! They are lost!"

Lacey sank down upon the steps and buried his face

in his hands. For the moment that brave young soul looked out upon the night and murmured:

"Fitting is the darkness; better there should be no morning."

The heart that would bear its grief unseen, that endures silently, is the heart that suffers. For the first time his sublime faith refused its aid to the heroic soul of le Bon and he leaned against the door for support; then, turning away that none might see the look of anguish on his face, he passed outside. There, hidden from view on the other side of the vine that had concealed the Moslem, he knelt upon the ground. His head was bowed, and in that silent struggle with his grief, tears dropped upon the leaves. A gentle breeze, soft as an angel's whisper, touched his face tenderly, as though in sympathy. It moved the leaves of the vine, and something white attracted him. He touched it with his hand; then picked it up and took it to a window near, one from which a light shone dimly. It was a small kerchief, a delicate fabric, and on one of the corners, woven in the fine cloth, was the name "Louise."

Who shall say the prayer he had uttered had not its answer?

He pressed the white messenger to his lips and held it there; then placed it within his tunic, close to his heart. Some divine inspiration, stealing over him, softly as the gathering of the dew upon the rose leaves, comforted him. Hope came again, and courage, and faith, the faith that is born of courage. His heart began again its steady beat; the great arteries were filled; the blood forced in a stronger current to his weary brain, and he began to think.

"Do not sleep."

How the words came back to him! "Nor will we,"

he cried, and out over the night air, beyond the walls, over the plain and forest, the thought traveled faster than the night winds, faster than the flying horses, quicker than the light from the distant stars, and touched those two suffering, stricken souls, already miles away.

And as he stood thinking, a dozen bold plans entered his busy mind. Suddenly he started. "The Moslem!" he cried. "The plan seems possible. It is well he was not harmed. He is of the family of Emir-Feir, and loves money. Bohemond will pay. He will not be suspected, and will succeed. He must."

And the face of the young knight beamed again. In all that changing temper, through which an influence, greater than he knew, an influence that could reach, and mold hearts only such as his, hearts that were in tune with noble purpose, had led him, from a despairing anguish into a new and stronger faith, he had not heard the ominous noises in the distance. With quick steps he returned to the building. The Moslem still cowered against the wall. Touching him lightly on the shoulder, he exclaimed in a low voice:

"We have work for you; a mission in which there is danger, but if you perform it well, for every peril you shall have a golden reward. We are men who never forget to requite a service or punish a wrong. Wilt undertake it?"

"You have trusted me once," the man replied. "I did not fail you in yonder park. My kinsman loves not the Turkish master. Escape with Azzadin were easy for me had I so chosen. Tell me your wish, and think not that danger is new to me."

"It is well spoken," answered le Bon; "go then quickly. Escape from the city while there is yet time. Follow those who have stolen away the captives. You

will not be suspected, but do not seek unnecessary peril. When you learn where the girls are detained, get speech with them if you can, and then return. When the city is ours, we will give such directions at the gates as will insure your safety, and you will find us at the quarters of Bohemond."

As he ceased speaking, le Bon advanced a step, and grasped the hand of the Moslem. Their eyes met; then, exclaiming:

"I will do all; more, perchance," the man passed quickly from the building, and in another moment was swept away in a crowd of frantic Turks, flying before the Crusaders.

The two knights watched the retreating figure until it was lost in the frightened throng; then, turning to his companion, Lacey said, softly:

"You are wiser, braver than I."

"Not so, brother. The thought was not mine."

Lacey looked at the young knight inquiringly, and the two went out again into the darkness. Tancred and L'Enfans had already disappeared. The love of the former was the noblest influence that had ever reached his heart, but in the moment of his pain, first duty, then glory, came, and amid the harsher thoughts, love was timid.

An hour before when the company of bold knights first sped from the northern gate, the great army of the Crusade began its awful work. The momentary valor of the twenty-five thousand soldiers of Baghisian, was but a breath blown against the tempest. Antioch was the first great city the Crusaders had entered, and it lay powerless at their feet. An unconquerable zeal pushed forward those iron hearts. Golden treasures allured them. That fearful night began in battle led by heroic

piety and ended in massacre wrought by avarice and greed.

At the first alarm, the Turks, bold as their adversaries, rushed upon the intruders. The sword of Godfrey cleft a daring Moslem from shoulder to thigh, and his swift horse bore but half the dead man away. A blow from the weapon of the Norman, Robert, left a headless trunk, and the pitiless Count cried:

"I devote thy head to the demons of hell."

Then there were pious shouts, and screams of defiance, and cries of pain. Still the swords descended and rang against each other; and the cruel lances were reddened with blood. And as the dead Moslems began to cover the ground, those who were living, fled, and turning, fought again, and fled. At every street, they turned and fought with desperate courage, and in the shadows of the buildings that lined the way were dead faces; nor were they all Moslems, for many a Christian head was pillowed on Moslem breast; so soon death made brothers of them.

At every frightful onslaught, the numbers of the Turks grow smaller. Their strongest and bravest are dead. One more terrible effort, and they fly, some to the citadel, where there is at least temporary safety, and some to the gates, which are still open behind them. And now the city lies weeping. The blows the Crusaders have met have but aroused their greater fury. The sight of blood maddens them. Their vast numbers are covering the city. Defenceless ones crowd the streets, hoping to escape, and fall beneath their cruel weapons. And as they kill, the frenzy of the Crusaders deepens. They rush into the houses, where an hour before, mothers were sleeping with innocent babes nestled to their bosoms. Little these mothers

know of the Holy Sepulchre; small share have they in the quarrel between Turk and Christian. The frightened, weeping ones cower before them and ask for mercy, and there are maidens, fair as the women of France, who kneel with hands clasped, pleading for their lives, pleading for pity from these hearts of Christians.

Mercy? Pity? Seek them of the tiger, or the untamed savage, who, if he has a soul, knows it not. To-night there is no mercy, no pity in Antioch. Conscience is stifled. Piety and passion riot together in the mad dance of death. The crying babes are thrown from the windows, and mothers and maids are strangled or slain with the sharp weapons of the Crusaders. Were such things done in France, this frenzied Christian host would marvel that God did not stretch out His arm and shield the loved ones.

In the houses and in the streets; everywhere blood was flowing, and as the feet of the Crusaders slipped in the red stream, they cursed the Moslem from whose side the life current was ebbing away.

Passion, unrestrained, fans itself into fiercer flames, and when, in the houses they had entered, there were no more to kill, they became vandals, destroying alike the plain ornaments and furnishings that had appealed to the memories and comforts of the poor, and the decorations of the palace. Rare paintings were torn down; statues and carved figures and rich vases were overturned and thrown upon the bodies of the dead. Then they sought other homes and fought with each other in their insane rage, each to enter first where there were more victims, helpless ones, who could not strike a blow, and who died as had the others, pleading.

And so amid the cries and groaning, the supplication and the tears, the dreadful scene went on in the dark-

ness of that awful night. To Raymond and Godfrey, to Bohemond and Tancred, to Lacey and le Bon, it was a conquest for the Crusade; to the vast army of Crusaders it was a carnival of blood.

Half the city had been already swept by the storm of passion, and the tempest surged toward the little park. Ready to strike again, L'Enfans advanced toward the broad street. There the dread picture was unfolded. Unarmed and unresisting fugitives were flying from the pitiless ones; old men, and maimed, women and innocent children, torn suddenly from happy slumber. He saw the cruel blows descend on those whose limbs were numbed by terror; saw them fall and heard the laugh of the fiends whose blades were dripping. For a moment he gazed with horror upon the scene. Then returning his weapon to its sheath, he cried:

"C'st Enfer!"

And his great heart filled with anger. In their fright some of the fugitives passed without noticing him, and others seeing his Crusader's dress, sprang away with cries of terror. The Crusaders now are around him. A mother, holding her babe tightly to her bosom, flies toward him, flying she knows not where, for where in Antioch is escape possible? Long ago, the woman would have fallen and died, but the mother's instinct struggles for her babe.

Now a Crusader seizes her, and tears the infant from her arms. With a despairing cry the mother drops upon her knees. Grasping the feet of the little one, the brute is about to dash its head against the hard stones. Then, swift and angry as the flashes of the storm, L'Enfans springs upon him, and as he falls the knight tenderly hands the babe to its mother. The woman tries to thank him, but she cannot speak; nor is there time, for the

"HIS EYES STARE, AND AS THE KNIGHT RELEASES HIM HE FALLS TO THE GROUND DEAD."

Crusader has risen, and furious with passion is rushing upon L'Enfans. His sword is already descending with terrible force upon the knight. L'Enfans grasps his arm, and tearing the weapon from his hand, throws it upon the street. Then his fingers tighten around the brute's throat like cords of steel. The Crusader struggles desperately, and tries to free himself from that deadly grip. With all his strength he cannot move a finger of the hands that hold him in death's embrace. The cords grow tighter, the man's broad chest trembles convulsively. His eyes stare, and as the knight releases him he falls to the ground dead.

All the horror that had encompassed the woman had come so quickly that she had stood as one dazed till the tragedy was ended; and when L'Enfans touched her arm, and, pointing to the building in the park, told her to seek shelter within its walls, her eyes alone expressed her gratitude.

Then the noble fellow sought out other suffering ones, and helped them along, and fought for them. His great heart was human. The Crusade had not made him a brute, nor had pious zeal transformed him into something less noble than a man. No one could strike a foe more terrible blows. No man could be more gentle with the crushed and helpless. Guarding these tortured ones, he built around his own soul a wall of strength. Then Lacey and le Bon came and assisted him, and one by one they led the fugitives to the place of refuge, guarding every entrance till Tancred and other noble knights came and forced back the crazed throng that howled as wolves cheated of their prey.

And so the long hours passed. The night of pain and grief ended. The gray daylight came, and the stars closed their eyes on a scene of ruin and misery,

just as they had closed them on a million other scenes of pain, and suffering, and death; all pitiless links in an unthinkable chain, impossible to human conception of Infinite Love, a chain that reaches from the first revolutions of formless, vaporous dust, toward the perfecting of a soul.

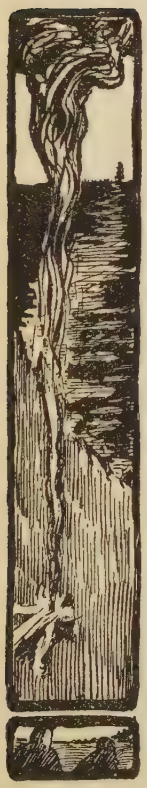
And then the sun rose and smiled and touched with playful glance the upturned faces of a hundred thousand, who lay dead in the streets of the city.

The slaughter had ceased, for the Crusaders were exhausted, tired of killing; and those of the unhappy Moslems who were yet alive were made to bury the dead and clean the city. Sad, yet grateful task; among the silent forms were the faces of those they had loved, and when all were laid away, they washed the blood from the streets, and mingled their tears with the crimson stains upon the stones.

If nature is seemingly cruel, she is also just. Pain may attend progressive law, but individual wrong cannot escape retribution, nor may national crimes fail of punishment. No man may safely crush another's life, or cloud a heart. The crime of Antioch was punished. Retribution came to the Crusaders, and came quickly.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE MOSLEM'S STRANGE STORY



IT was still early in the morning of the third day after the capture of Antioch. Lacey and le Bon were sitting in the building, where their bright hopes had died away in such despair, the hour they had first entered the city; in the very room, where they felt sure the two loved ones had passed so many of the weary hours of their captivity. Everything there, the chairs in which they had rested, the little table, and the vase of flowers, which though now faded, still remained just as they had been left; all seemed sacred in their eyes. There was comfort even in their sad associations, and they were now sitting silently, just as they had sat so many times, drawing each an inspiration of love and hope.

Turning to his companion, Lacey was about to speak, when the door was suddenly opened, and looking up, they saw the Moslem who had been so hastily dispatched on the mission nearest their hearts, the night of their cruel disappointment. Springing toward the man, they questioned him eagerly, scarce noticing his soiled clothing or the wearied look upon his face.

The Moslem waited no second appeal.

"I have found them," he cried. "All that long night

and the following day, I hastened toward the south with the straggling crowd. None of them could keep pace with me; and as I hurried forward, I overtook horsemen, whose tired animals could no longer be urged to greater speed. The second night I reached a little cluster of houses on the bank of a river. I could go no farther. In one of the houses I obtained food and was given a little hay for a bed. Near me were other fugitives, and in the morning, I heard one of them, who seemed to be an officer, say, 'We must be near the army of Corbogha.'

"Daylight had chased but half the shadows away, when I again sped on along the river bank. An hour later, the sun had risen. My eyes followed the light that played along the waters of the little stream, and in the distance the whole earth seemed moving. Then I saw the banners. It was the army of Corbogha, spreading out from the east to the west, as far as I could see. I sat down upon the grass and ate my morning meal of some bread and a few dates I had carried from the hamlet. Then I rose and walked toward the rapidly advancing host of horsemen and soldiers, watching all the while for some signs of those I had guarded so long in this little park, and was soon among that vast crowd, whose numbers seemed to cover the fields as far as my eye could reach.

"Turn as I would, I could only see galloping horsemen and the countless throng of soldiers whose spears and lances and axes and polished weapons of death glistened as they marched. I had worked my way, talking here and there with the soldiers, many of whom I learned were farmers, who, with a religious frenzy equal to what I have been told exists among your own people, had left their fields and growing crops, to join the

avenging host, toward the center of the army, when, near the midday hour, I beheld the most marvelous sight my eyes ever looked upon.

"In front of me, was what seemed a palace moving on wheels, and such was its size that I am sure at least two thousand or more might have been seated within. In front of this curious structure, which was ornamented on every side with costly jewels, Corbogha rode upon a magnificent Arab steed, whose trappings fairly blazed with glittering gems. By his side were Kilidge-Arslan, the two Sultans of Aleppo and Damascus, and the Emir of Jerusalem, all scarcely less decorated than himself. Following, were the great lords and officers of the Sultans, and in a great circle were three thousand guards, whose horses, as well as themselves, were encased in complete armor of steel. And as they passed, while I stood transfixed with astonishment at the strange spectacle, my eyes rested upon a sight that interested me more than all I had witnessed. It was the two captives seated in a chariot, last of all within the circle. Beside them was Azzadin and the few Moslems I had often seen here with him. I hurried along but could not get nearer to them, for the guards kept us all away with their long spears.

"Early in the evening we halted for the night, though I could see, far toward the east, columns still moving. Corbogha and the Sultans, together with many of the officers, entered the great palace, and the guards and soldiers busied themselves removing the armor and trappings from their horses and preparing their evening meal. I kept my eye on the captives, and saw them removed to a large pavilion which had been quickly spread. Near by, Azzadin and his men were arranging their quarters for the night. After the evening meal I

drew nearer to the great circle, and noticing some slaves carrying water for the horses of those inside I waited till quite dark; then, accosting one of them who seemed more weary than the others, and acquainting him with my curiosity to witness the magnificence of that grand enclosure, I had no difficulty in persuading him to give me the garment that marked his servitude. With a yoke, from which were suspended two huge water jars, I passed the guards, and was soon relieved of my burden by those whose thirsty animals eagerly swallowed the grateful liquid. Several times I thus passed back and forth; then, seeing that I was not observed, I dropped to the ground under the shadow of a tree just beside the pavilion and relieved myself of the yoke, an incumbrance which bore none too gently upon my neck. The camp was now quite still. Many of those within the circle were already sleeping. Very quietly I withdrew from the ground one of the wooden stakes which fastened the edges of the pavilion, and cautiously looked inside. The two girls were sitting together at the farther side. I could see from the movement of their lips they were talking, but could not hear a sound. I determined, at all hazard, to speak to them. The removal of the stake left sufficient space to admit my body.

"Moving slowly forward, my head was already inside. They were still sitting in the same position; so far I was not observed. For the moment, a sense of extreme peril almost overpowered me. In their unhappy situation, the two captives were naturally fearful of everything around them. If in the moment of sudden surprise, when they first noticed me, there should be an outcry, escape were impossible. I tried to still my breathing, but the effort made the sound louder. My heart was beating wildly. Then a strange guilty feeling came over me; yet with

it all, I advanced a shoulder and arm within. Some little noise I must have made startled them, and as both their eyes met mine one of them screamed; at the same instant I made a quick sign of caution, and placed a finger on my lips. The other, she with the darker eyes, grasped her companion's arm, and looked at me with an expression I shall never forget; in it were fright, doubt, hope, and a courage that ruled them all. The cry that had escaped was drowned in a sudden noise outside. There were loud voices and the quick tread of horses' feet that shook the ground around me. Hastily withdrawing my head, I lay still and saw a company of Moslems. Two, who seemed to be leaders, dismounted and were about to enter the pavilion. The guard stopped them. There were angry voices, and drawing their weapons, the two were about to force their way inside, when Azzadin, whose watchful eye nothing seems to escape, came and spoke a few words rapidly, but as one accustomed to be obeyed. One, whom he called Bagi, put up his sword; the other, a much taller man, who looked more like a Frank than Moslem, was still furious, but finally, yielding to some suggestion of his companion, both mounted their horses, and the whole troop rode away toward the palace of Corbogha. Azzadin stood watching them till all was again quiet; then with a low chuckle he muttered:

"'Proud fool! I would it were some other hand; yet mine may be first to find the traitor's heart.'

"With these words, he started to walk around the pavilion, as if to see that no one of the band had been left behind. With each step, as he approached me, I felt that death was drawing nearer. Never before had the night air been so cold. Yet there was a chance. I was lying on my right arm, so that my body hid the

place where I had drawn the stake, and my hand clutched the handle of a short weapon I had concealed. His sharp eyes soon spied me, and, coming close, he bent over and looked into my face. In that one intense moment were crowded a score of years. And yet, seemingly I slept on, nor did a muscle of my face move. Perhaps it was the extremity of fear rather than courage. He looked at the water jars, then at my slave's dress, and exclaiming:

"'Tis only a slave, stealing unbidden rest. Would that I could sleep as soundly!' he continued his walk.

"I waited till the sound of his footsteps had died away, and then, cautiously raising the fold of the pavilion, I again looked inside. Both the girls were sitting just as they were, their eyes riveted to the place where my face appeared. Making a sign of caution, I hastily drew myself within, and removing the slave's dress, they recognized me. In a few words I told them of your grief and the mission you had given me. When I spoke of the tears I had seen you shed, they sobbed so that, trying in my rough way to comfort them, something came in my own throat I had not felt since I was a child. Then she with the darker eyes said:

"'Tell Lacey God will protect us. Tell him that each night something whispers to my soul; we shall surely meet in the triumph of the Crusade; and give him this token.'

"With that she handed me this little cross. 'Tis a pretty thing, but I know not the meaning of the two violets torn apart, she said she, herself, had painted on it.

"Handing me this bit of gold shaped like a heart, the other said:

"'Give this to Monsieur le Bon, and say that you saw

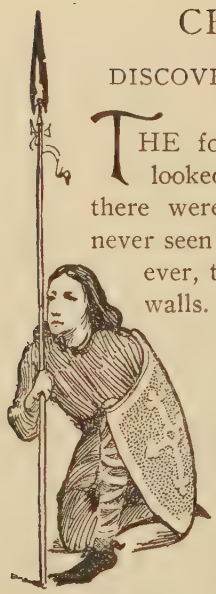
"'TIS ONLY A SLAVE, STEALING UNBIDDEN REST.'"

a tear from Louise fall upon it, and tell him to be not rash.'

"There was no need for more, and hastily resuming my former attire I withdrew. There were several horses near the pavilion, and, selecting one, I adjusted the yoke about my neck and led him past the guards unnoticed. Not far away, I found the slave, who, fast asleep, had taken no notice of the time. I was not sorry to be relieved of my load and the slave's garment, neither of which suited my disposition any too well. Then, carefully leading the animal till I reached the outer watch, I mounted and urged him forward. It was a long ride, and I was never more happy than when I saw the morning sun shining upon the walls and towers of the city. But I have spoken too long. Your princes and chiefs should be apprised of their danger. The numbers of the Moslem army are countless. Some told me there were two hundred thousand; others, five times as many. By tomorrow they will be in front of every gate in Antioch."

CHAPTER XXVII

DISCOVERY OF THE HOLY LANCE



THE following morning those on the towers looked out over a sea of angry faces, and there were strange banners, such as they had never seen before. Secure, as they thought, however, the Crusaders laughed behind the great walls. They knew that Alexius, eager to profit by their victory, was coming with an army great as their own, and they feasted as the Moslems gathered around them. But it was a prize already won Alexius sought, and when he learned of the great army that besieged the Crusaders he turned back, leaving them to their fate. Some one brought the news. It was a shadow such as first heralds the night.

And there came a day when the great granaries were empty. Prodigality and waste had borne their fruit, and the shadow deepened. Then hunger came, and its sword was sharper than that of the foe without. Day after day the pain and suffering grew, nor would prayers and penance stay the torture. Those whose greedy hands clutched the spoil, once the treasure of the homes in Antioch, gave up all for bread. Noble and serf alike begged on the streets of each who passed. Dying animals were greedily eaten, nor did bird or insect escape; and men fought with each other for unclean food. Some there were who hid themselves away, and bore in silence

the consuming torture; others snatched a morsel from the mouths of starving children, or a drop of milk from babes who cried upon the bosom of the dying mother; and there were others still, who, crazed with the gnawing pain, laughed, as in their despair they took their own lives. Night brought no soothing sleep; day no relief. The stars shut their eyes, and the sun smiled upon the punishment, just as they had upon the crime.

Then in their misery many tried to escape. Some dropped from the walls into the moat below. Others, less desperate, brought ropes and let themselves down. "Rope dancers" they were called. And first among the "rope dancers" was Peter. Preaching the Crusade in sunny France had little thought of starving in Antioch. Twice was he now foresworn, but he was brought back with most of the others, who were not killed in the fall, by Tancred, who swore he should not leave the Crusade his own words had inspired, till its end was accomplished.

And so the misery and the pain grew. Strong men, bravest and foremost in battle, men with hearts of steel, cried, as bent and twisted by the pangs of that biting plague, they wandered with uncertain steps, eyeing each other hungrily. Nor did Lacey and le Bon escape. They bore the pain silently, and only their pale and shrunken faces, and their eyes told the story.

It happened one afternoon, that L'Enfans was walking along one of the streets that were lined with palaces; homes of the rich. All of them had been searched many times, and such food as they contained eagerly seized by the Crusaders. He was thinking of France and of a house where there was plenty, and where there were joy and laughter, and eyes that did not stare hungrily. A slight noise attracted his attention, and looking up he saw a woman standing in the doorway of one of the

houses. She was a Moslem, but Moslem and Christian were that day equal. Suffering had made them so. There was something friendly in the woman's face, and in an absent way he entered the house. The woman looked at him closely a moment, and then led him to a room near by, where on a little couch an infant was sleeping. Pointing to the little one she exclaimed:

"This is the babe you saved from a horrible death on that awful night, and gave back to my arms."

L'Enfans recognized the woman and made an effort to smile. She saw the pain his brave heart would have concealed, and with a glad look on her face, cried:

"Sit you here and watch the babe. You shall see I am not ungrateful."

Then, leaving the room quickly, she returned in a few minutes, and in her hands were a loaf of barley bread and a few dried dates.

L'Enfans rose to his feet, and then sank back again; and he clutched the bread, and looking at her tried to say something, but could not speak. The brave knight, whose strong arm had done such battle for her, trembled now as he sat there, weaker than the babe that lay sleeping, and the woman fell on her knees by his side, and broke some of the bread and placed it in his mouth, and cried as she saw him eat it. He swallowed a few morsels eagerly and then suddenly stopped. There was a look of pain on his face, and rising to his feet he exclaimed:

"I have two friends who suffer. They saved my life when I was dying of thirst."

"Take the loaf," she answered, "and divide it with them. You shall have as much each day, so long as it lasts."

L'Enfans took the woman's hand and placed it to

his lips. Then concealing the food in his tunic he hastened away. Out in the street hungry eyes followed him, but those he passed little knew of the wealth he carried.

Lacey and le Bon were sitting in the room that seemed to them ever full of gentle influence. They had been speaking of the loved ones. Lacey rose and walked across the floor; then turning to his companion he said:

"Some fearful thought oppresses me; nor, strive as I will, can I drive it away. When the Moslem we sent to discover those we had hoped to find here, returned and related his story, did it not strike you as strange, that Azzadin, he so often mentioned, had such interest in them?"

"The question you ask has, indeed, risen in my own mind," replied le Bon. "Azzadin is a Moslem, and seems to have authority. Doubtless he has a motive. Perhaps it springs from one greater than himself. Guibert must have some interest, and if the girls are safe, is it not better so? Better, too, that Guibert should live. His life, miserable though it be, is the thread, slender and weak perhaps, that leads to those we love, and holds them in present safety."

"Your words are full of comfort, and there is reason in them," Lacey answered; "and yet when I learned today that Guibert had returned, when I see the misery around us, the starvation, and feel this dreadful hunger, hope is strained. Faith even is——"

"Mon Dieu!" cried a well-known voice. "Pardon me for entering so suddenly. I couldn't help it;" and the next moment the bread and dates fell upon the table.

"Don't tell me," continued L'Enfans, "there are no Moslems with souls." And then he told them the story of a babe and a mother, of something nobler than the

Christians' Crusade, better than the Moslem's creed—a story of human love and gratitude.

As he spoke, tears fell from the eyes of his listeners; and then, never were the viands of king's banquet more delicious than the remains of that meager loaf, to the three friends, as they sat around the little table in that sacred room. They spoke little, but each felt that something bound them together, stronger than the Crusade.

The last crumb had scarcely disappeared when an unusual noise outside attracted their attention, and L'Enfans ran out to see what had occurred. Many minutes elapsed before he returned; then, hastily pushing aside the door, his face glowing all the while with a strange excitement, he cried:

"A miracle! Victory is already in sight! But a few days more and not one of yonder host of scowling devils will remain! God, Himself, shall lead us, with those who will rise from the dead. A vision, thrice repeated in a dream to Bartholomew; a vision of St. Andrew, who each time charged him to find the Holy Lance.

"'Go,' he commanded, 'to the church of my brother Peter, and hard by the high altar you will find, on digging up the ground, the head of the spear which pierced our Redeemer's side. That, carried in front of the army, will deliver the Christians.' On three successive nights the words were repeated to Bartholomew—so he has just sworn in the council chamber before all the chiefs."

"Peter Bartholomew? Priest of Marseilles! Know you the man?" said Lacey, turning to le Bon.

"Aye, I know him," was the reply; "a man better acquainted with the wine cask than his ritual. And was Adhemar, the Pope's legate, there?" he added.

"Adhemar was present. Of all the chiefs, he was the only one who turned away and made no answer. All the

others believe the vision is true; at least so they say. Raymond is most confident of all, and, notwithstanding the wound he received the last time we drove the infidel farther from the gates, will himself witness the search, with twelve priests and knights."

"I hope there may be no deceit in it; and yet I wish it had been some other than Bartholomew," returned le Bon, thoughtfully.

"God uses such instruments as He will," said Lacey. "But let us go to the council chamber and learn more of this strange matter, which concerns us further than our loyalty to the Crusade."

Through what apparently insignificant trifles human lives are exalted or wrecked, nations die and empires are born! It was but a man who trod upon the neck of Greece and Persia, and from his arrogance and greed Egypt rose to her noblest civilization. In the sudden fright of a woman, everlasting night shadows a brilliant name, and Caesar adds an empire to dying Rome. The hosts of Britain cowed before a dreaming girl; and in the storm's electric flash a militant church was shaken to its foundations.

And now, with Jerusalem far away, the Holy Sepulchre behind a million lances, the fate of the Crusade, the lives of the starving Christians, now imprisoned within the walls of Antioch, hung upon the cunning of a shrewd priest.

Until it was quite dark, Raymond and the twelve who were with him watched the digger. Not a thing had been found, nor did the earth appear to have been removed since the foundations of the church were laid. Thoroughly disheartened, they returned to the council chamber. The room was filled and all around the house the Crusaders gathered in a vast crowd. The news

brought by the watchers was listened to in silence. Then the Crusaders looked at each other as men do who are desperate, and there were many voices demanding that they all abandon the Crusade and return home.

Godfrey was sternly upbraiding those who would be thus false to their promise, when a strange thing occurred. A shout was heard among the crowd outside; then a great tumult, and the cry of a mighty throng. Something in the sound sent a thrill through every soul, and in another moment Bartholomew burst into the room.

"It is found!" he cried; and unwinding a veil of silk and gold, he held aloft the head of a lance, which gleamed in the dim light.

"Behold," he continued, "the Holy Lance!"

Then in that one instant hunger and disease were forgotten, and those who a moment before were weak of heart shouted and sang and prayed in a wild delirium of joy. The chiefs examined the sharp point carefully, and the shoeless priest watched them curiously all the while. All that night the power of a holy inspiration caught up the hearts of the Crusaders and the old enthusiasm returned.

CHAPTER XXVIII

DEFEAT OF CORBOGHA

THE following morning the Crusaders were ready for battle, but the chiefs hesitated. Corbogha's army was powerful, its numbers overwhelming. Perhaps the Moslem would listen to terms. They would send a messenger, and Peter should be the man. Peter loved not blood, except it flowed from the veins of other men, but he was ever willing to talk, and at an early hour the gate opened, and he was dispatched on his mission. He was neither a statesman nor a courtier, and therefore with little ceremony and less dignity, after many high-sounding phrases, which meant little to the Saracen, he demanded that the Moslem army depart within three days, or feel the weight of the Crusaders' arms.

"If," said he to Corbogha, "you be so minded, one of our chiefs will meet you alone in battle, and whichever falls shall surrender all; or, if thou fearest for thine own person, select a certain number of your stoutest warriors and they shall be met by an equal number of our own. If neither of these proposals suit you, then we will fight you, army for army."

Corbogha had listened to the little monk, who had swollen to considerably more than his ordinary size while

he was delivering this somewhat remarkable speech, with no little amusement, and he now answered ironically:

"Peter, we know well the Franks are skilled in the use of brave words, and we know likewise the desperate condition into which my sword has brought them. Go back, and tell those fools that I should have smitten them long ago had it not been more convenient to destroy them by famine. Tell them that all I find among them, strong and well, shall live to be my slaves, and that the weak and useless shall perish as so many useless trees, so that there shall remain of them no remembrance. All shall reap the fruit of their journey here in the fulfillment of my vengeance."

When Peter returned to Antioch and announced in a somewhat pompous manner the result of his mission, a low glad murmur rose, and then, like the ocean storm that rises above the first swell that beats upon the shore, it deepened into a roar of defiance. All the old faith returned; all the old enthusiasm; all the old dream of glory. All the hunger was forgotten, all the misery. No man in that sickly throng, noble or serf, priest or monk, doubted of victory; and when the chiefs announced they would march forth in the morning, those who had limped to the council chamber, threw away their crutches and all got ready their arms, in eagerness for the battle.

Late at night three horsemen made the rounds of the gates to see that all was still outside. At the last or southern gate, the guards knew them and chatted pleasantly.

"A dark and perilous night, Monsieur de Hauteville, for one to be outside these safe walls," one cried.

"Do not open the gates," was the reply, "except to some poor wretch returning from a vain quest for food.

No honest knight will care to leave the city till morning dawns."

"But one has already left, almost at the moment you came," returned the guard.

"Do you know the man, and did he give a reason for leaving the city at such a time?" said another of the horsemen quickly.

"I know not his name, but I have often seen him in the quarters of Godfrey; he was very tall and dark, and has a face not easy to forget, nor yet pleasant to remember. He said he would ride awhile and watch for some sign of the infidel."

"Guibert!" cried the third knight. "Let me follow him," and moving toward the gate he added: "'Tis a good night, and fitting, for the settlement of a score that has stood already too long."

"Do not leave us, good L'Enfans," quickly answered the other, touching his horse's bridle.

"But do we not toy with danger, Monsieur le Bon?"

"No," answered the knight. "Believe me, there is a fate more powerful than your strong arm following him."

While the knights thus stood at the gate, Guibert—for it was he who had just passed out into the darkness beyond, was swiftly galloping toward the southeast. A few miles away, across the narrow plain that skirted the city, a single horseman stood within the shadow of a little grove. As Guibert approached, he rode forward slowly. The former slackened his horse's speed and the two approached each other cautiously. Neither spoke till they were near enough to see each other's faces. Then Guibert exclaimed:

"Ah! it is you, good Bagi!"

"Aye. I was expecting you. The tumult, then, in

the city yesterday, and the visit of the ill-spoken little monk to Corbogha, has a significance beyond the bravado of the Franks?"

"It does, indeed, else I had not come; for one does not leave Antioch tonight, without risk."

"Let us ride, then, to the Sultan, for the night advances."

"Aye, and I must return before midnight. My longer absence may arouse suspicion, and the Crusaders are in an angry mood."

A half hour's sharp ride brought them to the quarters of Corbogha. Kilidge-Arslan and all the Sultans and Emirs of the neighboring cities were summoned, and when they had arrived, Guibert told them all that had occurred in the city, and the determination of the Crusaders to risk everything in battle on the morrow.

Corbogha smiled. "You bring us good news," he exclaimed, "for we are weary of waiting for the mad fools to starve. Let them come to the slaughter." Then, turning to Kilidge-Arslan, he continued: "Say you not so, Lord of Nicæa?"

"You have not yet met these Christians in battle," replied the latter. "Believe me, some strange power urges them on; they fight as though each man had a thousand lives. Hunger now torments them. Starvation and disease are cheap weapons. I would advise that we move the army this night nearer the gates, that not a man of them may escape from the walls alive."

"But," cried the Emir of Jerusalem, "we cannot wait here longer safely. A new danger threatens. We have news today that Mostali, Caliph of Egypt, learning our absence, is about to attack our holy city. Tomorrow, if we choose, this affair may be so settled that we may never hear of the Christian dogs again, and the Egyptian

pretender will sue for clemency toward the impious thought that has crossed his brain."

All the other Sultans and the twenty-eight Emirs of cities voted for immediate battle, and orders were issued that each division be ready at sunrise. Then, turning to Guibert, Corbogha exclaimed:

"You have this night rendered us a double service, and we do not forget; be content. I remember your wishes. After the battle, come to me when you can."

Guibert bowed, and turning away, rode rapidly toward the city. In spite of his haughty air, he was ill at ease. Sooner or later crime traces pictures that startle the soul, and touches the nerve with no gentle hand. The air of that June night was not cold, and yet something like a shiver ran through his veins. The beat of his horse's hoofs seemed multiplied by a score of phantom sounds, and as he passed through the city's gates, shadows of ghostly riders seemed to be pursuing him. The guards questioned him, and he scarce knew what answers he returned; and as he passed on he saw a face that tortured him with hateful memories; a face he had seen in the wine room at Constantinople. All that long night the meanest soldier slept, while he lay with staring eyes, and morning dawned with wild fancies still tormenting his unrested brain.

The first glimmering ray of the morning light had scarce lightened the veil that hung over the city when the Crusaders were astir. It was the 28th of June, 1098, the day of the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul.

The chiefs divided such remnant of food as was found, and ordered that every morsel be eaten.

"Spare none," cried Godfrey, "for tonight we feast."

And all the hay that was left was fed to the starving horses. The animal that had carried Godfrey so many

miles had died, and Raymond, who was unable to take part in the conflict on account of his wound, generously loaned the brave Duke his own horse.

When all was ready, the Christian army marched out of the city. First of all were the clergy—the bishops and priests, and at their head was the chaplain of Count Raymond, who carried the Holy Lance, and who, himself, afterward related the thrilling story. As they passed out of the gate they chanted the 68th Psalm—

"Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered."

The whole army joined in the sacred music. Next to the clergy were the chiefs. Lacey and le Bon were riding next to Bohemond, and as they listened to the divine harmony, and saw the lance lifted high, that all might behold it, Lacey turned to the Duke and exclaimed:

"Is it really true that yonder spear is the lance that pierced the Redeemer?"

For the moment a curious expression passed over the face of Bohemond—something of doubt, something of irony, and much of affection for the speaker.

"It matters little," he replied, "so they believe; true or false, they will fight as stoutly."

Never was an expedition started that promised less. Scarcely a fourth the number of the foe they were about to encounter; a mere remnant of their former strength; many of them crippled by disease; a sublime faith in a fictitious emblem, filled their souls with the enthusiasm that had inspired them, when, two years before, they marched forth from the gates of Toulouse, and from all the cities of Loraine. Great barons and noble knights marched on foot with the soldiers, for of the sixty thousand horses, with which the Crusaders entered Antioch on the night of the massacre, scarce two thousand were still able to bear their riders. In twelve divisions, this

strange unreasoning host began the advance, with step in time, and soul in tune to the sacred chant. And these were the same men that, less than a month before, had entered that suffering city amid scenes of crime and riot and misery and blood that would have made demons blush.

Oddly enough clouds formed above their heads, clouds that were seldom seen in these summer months, in Syrian clime, and a gentle rain refreshed them on the march.

The sight of the Turkish army, many times as great as their own, seemed to inspire them with greater courage. Something about their determined air impressed the Moslem chiefs strangely as they rode forward to meet them. Kilidge-Arslan already knew their temper, and in spite of his own magnificent army, whose frenzy seemed equal to that of the Crusaders, Corbogha repented his threat of the previous day, and when he saw Peter with those who were carrying the Holy Lance he exclaimed:

"Peter, I am minded to deal more kindly with you than I thought yesterday. You see my army, which can easily encircle and destroy you by very weight of numbers. Say to your chiefs that if they submit and deliver up Antioch to me they may return home unmolested."

"It were idle, and but a useless waste of words to deliver such message. God has commanded us to follow yon sacred lance that you may see borne by hands that carry no other weapon. Look upon the faces of those who march behind it, and tell me if there is one among them who will this day turn from the battle."

"The spear head," replied Corbogha, "is but a counterpart of a hundred thousand in my own army. Some cunning priest has but stolen a Moslem lance, which has

no doubt been oft more bravely used than in such impious falsehood. But since ye refuse the terms, I will accept your own offer. Six of your best knights shall meet as many of my own, and the army, whose champions are all dead, though but one remain alive of their antagonists, shall yield to the others."

"That," answered Peter, "I did offer, and you refused. Now all the Crusaders have come to do battle. Nor are they all. Think not they will fight alone. Look toward yonder hills, and you may already see knights, clad in raiment like the snow, riding upon horses white as the fleecy clouds through which the morning sun is shining; and there will be others, risen from the dead; others whose forms you cannot see, but as the battle goes on your strongest men at arms will find their hands stayed, and their hearts chilled with sudden fear by some dread, some indefinable presence from which they will seek to fly, and some will fall from wounds made by no mortal hands. Before this day shall end, all that are left of your proud army shall fly as the frightened sheep before the desert storm or the ragged flame that tears apart the sky."

"By Allah! then let the fight begin!" cried Corbogha, as he turned and rode back to the Saracen banners, which were all the time floating over six hundred thousand maddened Moslems, each as full of insane zeal as the boldest Crusader.

But the words of Peter, the vision of the white robed knights, and the indomitable air of the Crusaders, all had their effect on the Saracen princes, and while Kilidge-Arslan assured Corbogha the supernatural scene on the distant hills was but a trick of the Crusader chiefs, he could not himself shake off the sense of impending defeat and ruin. The superstition, the unreasoning faith,

the mental force and the determined will of the Christians wrought upon the souls of their powerful enemies before a blow was struck.

Both sides began the battle simultaneously. Corbogha had promised the Caliph the Christian army should be destroyed, and his first efforts were directed toward cutting off its retreat to Antioch. But the Crusaders struck no blow for Antioch. Little they cared for the walls, within which they could but starve; and, rushing forward, their long lances began to cover the ground with dying Moslems, in a determined effort to reach the center of the army. Then all the demons of rage and hate and passion, screamed and roared over that furious struggle. Lance and sword rang against each other, and eyes of Turk and Christian gleamed as the sands were painted by the crimson tide. Long and desperately the fierce struggle went on. The Christians fought for their lives, and sustained by a mighty faith, the fiction within their own souls grew into something real, something that pushed away the hands of death that clutched at them.

Bohemond led the way toward the camp of Corbogha. Slowly the Saracen hosts melted away before him. Then Kilidge-Arslan rushed upon him with such terrible force that he seemed about to be borne down beneath a forest of lances. Lacey flew to his side, and Tancred came; then Godfrey, and a score of Moslems fell beneath their swords before they could strike a blow. Bohemond and Tancred pushed forward and reached the edge of the Sultan's camp. Then the Crusaders' exultant battle cry rang out over bloody field, and as Corbogha turned from their furious rush, the Moslems fled as the frightened herds, falling over and crushing each other, in their mad efforts to escape. Lacey and L'Enfans were still some

distance behind fighting with some of Kilidge-Arslan's horsemen, who knew not yet that the battle was lost. The foremost knights with Bohemond ride through the royal camp. They have no time, in that desperate moment, to marvel at its wondrous beauty, its towers, its spacious streets, its glittering wealth, for some within, who fear not death, are still fighting.

The quick eyes of Tancred and le Bon are searching for the lost ones—Minette and Louise. How their hearts beat! Each knows not the other's love. And le Bon looks anxiously, too, for Lacey, but does not see him. Suddenly something like the pavilion the Moslem guard described catches his eye. It is partly torn down. Another leap of his horse and he sees a chariot, surrounded by Moslems, who are forcing the two girls upon it. Both are struggling, and their desperate resistance delays the Moslems' plans. He motions to Tancred, and the two fly toward the scene, swift as the eagle darts.

The Moslems are bold, and gather about the chariot. One mounts, and tries to urge the frightened horses forward, but the crowd of flying ones are in the way. One moment and two swords flash before their eyes. Their own weapons are shivered, as the lightning splits the forest trees. With Louise almost within their grasp, what are a dozen, a hundred Moslems to these noblest knights of France! Love nerves their arms of steel; love and vengeance. Quicker flash the swords, and the circling flame burns and cuts and kills. The Moslems cannot endure such blows, and those who are not already dead, bold men as they were, fly, little caring whither, so they escape the fury of those two who seem possessed of more than mortal strength.

Tancred leaps from his horse and in a moment Louise

is in his arms. The sight brings to the heart of le Bon no touch of pain. A great love, a joy, a wondrous happiness, fills his soul. Without an instant's pause, he strikes from his seat the one who is trying to force the horses away, and seizing the lines, draws upon the animals' bits so tightly, one is thrown to the ground. Then he darts quickly to the other side of the chariot for Minette; and now with arm already outstretched, as he gazes on the spot where but a moment before he had seen that sweet face, beaming with divine faith and courage, in that awful moment his heart stops its beating—for Minette is no longer there. Almost before his very eyes she has disappeared.

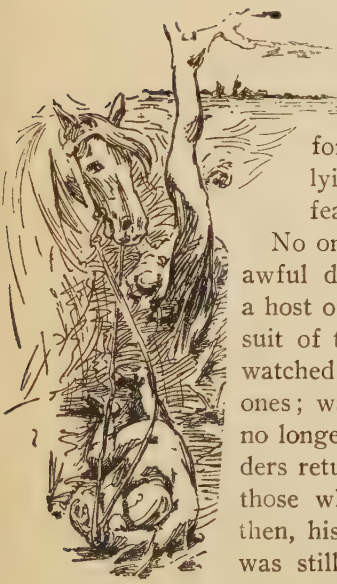
In a dazed way he looks about the chariot; then at the flying Moslems. All around, in their desperate haste, they are crowding upon each other. Here and there, a few Crusaders, boldest of the Christian knights, are gathering. Not far away his quick eye catches something like a woman's dress on one of the Moslem's horses, and crying,

"Ah, God! where is Lacey!" he presses his feet against his horse's side, and the noble animal springs forward. A bold Turk tries to block the way. Le Bon does not stop to strike, but leaping against him, the horse of the Moslem falls, and rolling over the daring rider, crushes him. On again he flies! Once more he sees the dress fluttering. He raises himself higher upon his horse that he may see the better. Beware! brave knight! A demon is drawing near, riding swiftly as your own brave steed! His tall figure is bent forward, and his arm is already raised. Le Bon strikes at a Moslem who comes too near, and then the very heavens seem to have fallen upon him. One moment earth and sky seem to meet

and part again. Then the ground from beneath his horse's feet rises up and embracing, draws him to its bosom. The sands are still ploughed by the feet of plunging horses. Moslems fly and Crusaders kill, but le Bon lies very still in the darkness, for the night came quickly.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE WOUNDED KNIGHT



IT was the hand of Guibert that struck the murderous blow, and as he saw the motionless form of the generous young knight lying upon the ground, he gazed fearfully around.

No one of the Crusaders had seen the awful deed. Tancred and Lacey, with a host of brave knights, swept by in pursuit of the flying Moslems, and Guibert watched them strike down the luckless ones; watched them till the Turks were no longer in view and he saw the Crusaders returning. They had not overtaken those who bore away Minette; so far, then, his plans had not miscarried. He was still master. For Louise he cared not. Better Minette should be alone. Her grief and fear would be the more hopeless. Within a few days he would find some way to meet Bagi. One more chance she should have, and then, if she were still unyielding, let the misery and the ruin he had sworn, come. He looked down again at the body of the knight. "One, at least," he exclaimed, in a hoarse whisper, "is gone. I would it were Lacey, but my hand shall yet reach him. What matters now, so one kills? I had hoped this day would end them all. Bah! how the

cowards ran! The Crusaders fought like madmen; and yet, few are dead. What strange power leads them ever to victory? Is there a God?"

Something like fear chilled his heart. Of all the silent forms that lay upon the ground he could see but one. Unconsciously he moved farther away; then rode slowly toward the camp. Misery and ruin! How the words lingered and repeated themselves in his brain! Both were coming, had already come to himself.

Slowly the knights were returning from the pursuit of the Moslems. They were tired with the blows they had struck in that day of death; weary of the slaughter. Tancred was relating to Lacey how Minette had, seemingly, vanished from before their eyes, and of the sudden disappearance of le Bon. That they should not have overtaken the latter seemed unaccountable, and yet, no one among the knights had seen him. Lacey was sick at heart. In the absence of his friend there appeared no light ahead. He was oppressed with the sense of some new evil. A weight hung over him; an influence; something undefined, yet impending.

L'Enfans rode by his side without speaking. They were now nearing the camp. Here and there bodies of the dead Moslems were lying upon the ground. Suddenly L'Enfans stopped and touched Lacey's arm, then pointed to a horse they both knew so well. The animal stood motionless. The rein fastened to his bit seemed to be wrapped around the arm of a knight who lay upon the ground. The face of the knight was turned from them. They looked into each other's eyes, and then, both silently dismounted. To Lacey the earth seemed melting away as the sunlight had gone. He walked softly as though fearing to wake some one who slept. It was but a few steps, and they bent over the knight. It was

le Bon. Very gently L'Enfans removed the rein from his arm, and placed it over the horse's head and stroked the animal kindly, asking him almost in a whisper, how it had happened, as though he were human.

Lacey kneeled by the side of the knight, and taking his hand looked into the face of that faithful friend. Something in its expression made his heart beat faster. The hand, too, he held was still warm. Lying close to the ground beside him, he placed his ear to the bosom of his friend. He seemed to hear some faint movement. Perhaps it was but a fancy, built on his own hope, and he turned him a little more on his side that he could hear the better. And now his own heart beat faster, for there was no longer a doubt. The spark was still there. Life was not wholly gone, and he looked again into the face and stroked the hand which rested limp within his own. Tancred had now come, and the three moved him gently and looked for the wound. Ah! 'Twas a cruel blow. The steel helmet was cut through and blood still flowed. His neck and tunic were wet with the crimson tide. Some hand he had not seen had struck.

L'Enfans had tenderly removed the helmet and was examining it with a puzzled look, while a rude litter was being brought. Then the knights gathered around, and with touch soft as a woman's placed him upon it and bore him carefully to the quarters of Bohemond. The Duke arose and looked at that brave young face, still motionless. Then he sent for one of the priests, a man skilled in surgery, and while they waited they placed the still form on a soft couch; one found in the camp of Corbogha; and then Louise came forward. She had not seen the face of the knight upon the litter. Lacey took her hand and kissed her cheek, leaving a tear upon it. Then, in speechless grief he led her to the couch

and she looked down upon the face of le Bon. Bohemond had turned sadly away and was walking to and fro with thoughtful air. Tancred had gone out to hasten the search for the priest, and the other knights had silently withdrawn.

One moment she stood still, silent as the form before her. Then she slowly sank till her knees rested upon the ground, and taking the knight's hand in both her own she laid her face upon it. In that instant, Minette, Lacey, all the world was forgotten. Strange fancies entered her brain, and struggled with reason. Her throat seemed to have closed so tightly she could not breathe. It pained her, and she tried to speak, to call Lacey, but he had turned away, and she could only gasp and moan. It was as the sighing of the wind over the drooped flowers before the storm breaks. A tear fell. The grip upon her throat loosened, and words came. She scarcely knew what, but they took away pain. Then she raised her head and looked at the pale face, and the storm broke.

"Do not tell me he is dead," she cried, rising suddenly, and looking at Lacey. "It cannot be. Oh! this hateful Crusade! What fiend put it into the hearts of Christians? And that he, noblest of all, should suffer; should die. No! I will not have it so. It shall not be. Why do you stand coldly by doing nothing? He would not have done so. Where is the priest? Forgive me, cousin. My heart is bursting with the torture." And she fell again by the side of that loved form, and laying her face against his own she stroked back his hair, and, with her arm around his neck, she kissed his lips, his forehead, and sobbed over him, and cried:

"Come back to me! You must not go away! You shall not. Speak to me, only a word! Look at me, Barri!"

Lacey started. Barri! It was the first time he had heard him called that name, and 'twas Louise who spoke it. She loves him then; and Tancred—but the thought was checked in something that startled him the more, for as if obeying her command, the lips of the prostrate knight moved, so slightly as to have been unnoticed except by the two watchers; the muscles of his face and forehead twitched as though the waking nerves were trying to stir them into returning life; the lids trembled; then opened, and the eyes looked full at Louise. And there was intelligence in them.

Mighty is the power of love that has called back a soul struggling on the border of two worlds! In that one instant two hearts promise, each to the other, eternal love and truth; and months afterward, the memory of that look returned to Louise—memory alone.

The eyes had closed again when Tancred entered with the priest. The good father came hastily to the couch. He noticed the slight flush that had come into the face of le Bon and placing his head lightly on the knight's breast, listened a full minute to the uneven flutter of his heart. Then raising slightly one of his arms, he let it fall again, and taking a little piece of glass from his robe placed it against the knight's lips, and leaving it there a little time withdrew to the light and examined it carefully. Bohemond drew near, and the four listened breathlessly for his words. Wiping the glass with his kerchief he exclaimed almost in a whisper:

"He lives yet, but——;" then leaving the words unsaid, he poured a few drops from a vial on the kerchief and held it to the knight's mouth, and let some fall upon his tongue. The eyes of le Bon opened again, and his breathing could be heard by them all. He moved his head a little and seemed trying to speak.

"Ah! 'tis not so bad, perhaps. Let me see where he is hurt," said the priest.

Touching him tenderly as they would a babe, Tancred and Lacey assisted in moving his body to one side, and the dreadful wound was exposed. The priest wiped away the blood, and examined the torn and bruised spot long and carefully. And all the while Louise stood by, and scarce breathing, watched every motion of his face. The sight of the blood, his blood, made her sick, but she bore it bravely.

"It was a terrible blow, and struck by a devilish hand; a strong one, too," said the priest finally. "A little lower down and he were not alive now. The cut is not so deep, but the bone is bruised and its outer surface crushed. He is young, and with good nursing, may yet strike as stout blows for the Crusade."

"And you, Louise, shall have this care," said Bohemond. "He could not have a gentler nurse. Mon Dieu! I like the young man, and though he be of Raymond's army, he shall stay here till we move back to Antioch."

The good priest then rubbed some healing salve on the wound, and the soft hands of Louise helped to bind it carefully. All the while life and consciousness had been returning. The heart beat more steadily, and standing by the couch, the watchers could see that he breathed again, and now at the touch of that hand, once more the eyes of the knight opened, and looking upon the faces around him, he tried to smile. For the moment he scarce realized what had happened. The blow had been so sudden. He was stunned by it; though there was little pain now, for nature, surprised, had not yet begun the struggle for life. Then his eyes sought Lacey, and looking upon him, he began to remember, and the smile faded away.

The priest motioned them all to leave him; all but Louise, and when they were gone, she sat down by him, and placed her hand within his own, so softly, it might have been a breath of air touching it. He turned his face toward her, and smiling, slept. Heaven is oft very near to earth!

Outside, Lacey found L'Enfans waiting him, and the great-hearted fellow cried when he told him le Bon might yet live. Then taking his arm, L'Enfans led him to his own quarters, where a rude light was burning. In his hand was le Bon's helmet. Holding it before Lacey, he said:

"Look at this carefully. It is light, but never was headpiece made of better steel. See with what force it has been cleft. This broad opening was never made by spear or lance, nor with the light scimitar of the Turks. Does it not look to you like a blow from the heavy weapon of a Frank?"

Lacey took the helmet in his hands and examined it; then looked at the speaker.

"Have you seen Guibert since the battle began?" he asked.

"I saw him once," replied L'Enfans, "when we were assisting Bohemond against that furious onslaught of Kilidge-Arslan. You remember, Godfrey rode to our aid. Guibert was near him. His sword was uplifted. 'Tis a ponderous weapon, but I did not see him strike a blow. Once again I saw him; 'twas just before you came. My curiosity led me yonder, where Godfrey's men are resting. He was standing apart from the others, looking as it seemed to me more like a murderer than a Christian. I would have given much to have taken a look at the long blade hanging by his side."

"By heaven!" cried Lacey, "if I knew it was he who struck that assassin's blow——"

"Do nothing rash. Have you not something of greater concern?" interrupted le Enfans.

A look of intense pain came upon Lacey's face.

"It is true," he cried.

"Leave him, then, to my care," continued le Enfans, "for it occurs to me I have a little matter to settle with him on my own account."

All that night and the following day were spent by the Crusaders in securing the spoils from the camp of Corbogha. Food and luxuries were in abundance. All Asia had contributed its wealth. And there were gold and silver, and gems, and precious stones that told in sparkling flashes of the magnificence of the Sultan, who, flying in terror, had left them all. Never before had the eyes of the Crusaders fallen upon such spoil. Never had their hands grasped such wealth. All was theirs, and each of the Christians found himself suddenly rich. Famine turns into a feast, and they who but the day before had starved, now glutted themselves to their fill.

Strange souls were these men. Today the Crusade was a frenzy; tomorrow it was forgotten. Apparent chastisement renewed the mad impulse. Suffering, privation, hunger, disease, defeat; these fanned the flames of their pious enthusiasm. In victory, though but a passing incident along the stubborn road that led to Jerusalem, all the glamour around the Holy Sepulchre, lost for the moment its magic power.

In the vast army of Corbogha the whole military power of Syria had been gathered. All the great cities from Antioch to Jerusalem, even the Holy City itself, had been stripped of their defenders, that an irresistible, overwhelming host might fall upon and crush the Christian army, leaving nothing but a hateful memory of the impudent Crusade. That great host was now destroyed.

All that escaped the slaughter were scattered as the dead leaves, that falling from the trees are tossed by the winter storms. No barrier remained that day between Antioch and Jerusalem. Before the Crusaders was an undefended road, but in the intoxication of the moment, piety had no share, and they laughed and jested and sang, as they feasted and gathered the rich plunder.

Four thousand of their own, and a hundred thousand Moslems lay dead upon the ground about them. Their own they buried, but it were easier to leave the field they had won than to dig so many graves for the infidel. Perhaps it made little difference, e'en though "a sparrow does not fall," nor is a grain of sand removed from its place in the ocean's bed without its effect; and so, on the second morning after the battle they prepared to depart. The wagons they had captured were still loaded with enormous supplies of food, and there were fifteen thousand camels, bearing upon their backs the choicest luxuries of the East. Each knight had a horse more fleet than his own poor brute that had starved and died in Antioch, and there were still thousands of others that were led away. There were slaves, too, many of whom were Christians, and those who were not, were freed with the others.

The couch on which le Bon lay was lifted by gentle hands into one of the chariots, and Louise sat by his side as they were driven slowly along. His wound was more painful, and the fever wrought by nature's restoring energy, burned and tortured him, but the pain and the burning were forgotten as he listened to the words of Louise, who related, during the hours of their return to Antioch, the incidents of her captivity with Minette. It was all a sad story. She had told it to Lacey the day before, a dozen times, and cried with him each time.

"Do not weep," said le Bon. "Minette has all the noble courage of her father. Alone, it will shine forth in such grandeur that no Moslem hand shall do her wrong. 'Tis for no idle purpose God has saved me from the full measure of that fiend's blow. My wound will soon heal, and neither Lacey nor myself will rest till we have torn her from the rude grasp of impious hands, though death hung in the very moment. But tell me of Azzadin. What interest hath he in the matter?"

"I know not," answered Louise. "But he has some high authority. Kilidge-Arslan, Baghisian, even Corbogha, all bow to his will. Something there is between him and Guibert, but I am sure neither trusts the other, and I fear 'tis not for Guibert he so carefully watches Minette, but that he hath conceived for her such love as could enter the heart of a Moslem; and it seems to me that in this passion he likes Guibert the less; though some compact there must be he fears to break."

"Then there is more reason Guibert should live till we have rescued her? God forbid it should be otherwise."

Not far away, at this very moment, Guibert was watching them. He did not know that the knight lying within the chariot was le Bon. He was looking at Louise.

"Why did the accursed cowards let her escape?" he muttered. "If she should speak; well, all is not, even then, lost. She could not know. Others have been among the Turks, and the Crusaders have seen me fight; yet I wish she were not here. If Azzadin has been false. Ah! the dog dares not."

They were now entering the gates of Antioch. The chariot was driven to the house in the little park so familiar to Louise. Lacey was already there, and coming forward he assisted in carrying le Bon inside. The room that less than a month before she had occupied with

Minette, was given to Louise, and she sat down and looked at the little table, the chairs, the flower vase, the relics and ornaments that hung upon the wall, the window where with Minette she had so often looked out towards the Crusaders' camp. Then, a great dread had hung over them both. They were days of sorrow, of fear, of mourning. Now, she would have given years of her life to have lived them over again.

Happy is a woman! for she can weep.

Antioch was merry again, and in their joy the Christians gave to the unfortunates who had escaped the slaughter and had lived through the cruel hunger. In feasting and revelry, in mirth, and dance, and song, and wanton pleasure, the fire of the Crusade did not burn; but a single spark lived on through it all; a spark that was yet to flame more fiercely than in any of the scenes that had passed, and burn deeply into the Moslem's heart.

Four days had passed since the battle when the four great leaders called together all the smaller princes and many of the knights, and deliberated whether they should continue their march, at once, to Jerusalem. Some there were who were secretly preparing to return home with the sudden wealth they had secured. Others were averse to leaving the pleasures of the city, and still others, indifferent to the Crusade, and jealous of the chiefs, talked about acquiring for themselves, as Baldwin and Bohemond had already done, individual conquests. A few only urged that they go forward and complete the pious work they had sworn to accomplish. Strangely enough, Guibert was foremost among the latter. He, whose heart was never in the Crusade, was now among the most eager.

No one in that council was so impatient as Lacey; yet,

he listened to the words of Guibert with surprise and pain.

"It makes me the more sick at heart," he said, in relating the incident to le Bon; "for would it not seem that Guibert himself fears that in the ruin of Corbogha's army, Minette is lost to us all?"

"While we live it is not possible," answered le Bon.

And so the Crusaders stayed and wasted the summer months. If a Divine Hand had led them to this Crusade, why should It not punish their apathy, their personal quarrels, their pride of conquest? Perhaps it was punishment, perhaps it was but natural law, that carried off half their remaining numbers with an epidemic, a plague, that spared neither the weak nor the strong in those burning days. Then the autumn came, and with it other Crusaders, from France and from far-away Britain. Some new piety they brought, and the old impulse came. The gates were opened and they marched forth. Nearby were towns that invited, and so they massacred, as at Antioch, and he who first entered, declared himself king, ruler of the city, poor as it was when the storm of pillage and death had swept it. And over the dead homes, they quarreled and fought, hating each other as they had the Turks.

Such madness had come upon them that even Raymond was seized with it; he who had never before turned from the one intense thought of Christian glory; the stern, inflexible warrior, whose soul had been fixed on the Holy Sepulchre; the bearer and chosen guardian of the Holy Lance.

Down below Antioch, scarce a hundred miles away, was the ancient city of Marrah. Of all the others Raymond was in the advance. We imagine the golden sunlight flashed over the walls and steeples of the city.

Wild desire was in the air. One by one the others had proclaimed themselves lords. Why should not he?

And so the charge was made. There was little or no defense. The terrified inhabitants were not ignorant of the awful fate of their neighbors in the other cities around them, and in their wild fears they buried themselves in underground caves. In wanton cruelty the Crusaders built great fires at the entrances, and as the poor, tortured Moslems emerged, some were killed and others spared for slavery worse than death.

Gratified ambition seemed to have conquered the indomitable Raymond, and he began to talk about strengthening the walls, and a garrison for the city. For the moment he was indeed a prince. Marrah was his, and the flag of Toulouse floated proudly over it.

But the soul of the Crusade was not dead. Something there was in it that defied the desert and the mountain, the burning thirst and the famine, battle and plague, golden greed and princely ambition. The unextinguishable spark needed but a breath, and it was at hand.

It chanced now that strange news came; news that stirred to anger the Christians who had found no profit it the conquests of the chiefs. It came as a fierce wind from the west, and the flame burst forth. Mostali, the Caliph of Egypt, had driven the Turks from Jerusalem, and now a host more fanatical than their old enemy interposed between them and the Holy Sepulchre.

The summer had long since ended and autumn was turning to winter. Lacey and le Bon, ever among the foremost, were at Marrah. They had taken no part in the slaughter, for hearts that love do not quarrel with mercy; and now, le Bon was first to bear the cruel news to Raymond.

"Must Jerusalem," he said, "the Holy City we have

sworn to rescue, be captured and recaptured by Turk and Saracen, and never by Christians? Lead us on, noble Count. To you the army of France looks for deliverance from the fatal spell that hangs over us."

"It shall be so," replied Raymond. "I will call together the princes. In two weeks, a month at most, I may complete the defense of Marrah, and then——"

"Quarrels about Marrah!" cried Tancred, who then appeared. "Nothing but quarrels! and mean conquest, and shameful pride!"

A host of Crusaders had now gathered about. Some one among them shouted:

"God willeth it."

And the multitude caught up the old familiar words.

"Choose we a leader," they cried. "There shall be no more disputes about Marrah," and, with one accord, they began to tear away the walls.

Raymond could not resist such pious enthusiasm. The holy light came again to his eyes, and the noble old man sprang to the work among them; nor did he cease his labor, till the ramparts were leveled to the ground. Then, barefooted, he marched at their head, with the Bishop of Akbar, for Adhemar had died in Antioch of the plague. Closely following was Tancred, with Lacey, le Bon, L'Enfans and a hundred other knights; then came the multitude, and with prayer and sacred chant, they bore away toward Jerusalem.

Hearing of their sudden departure, Bohemond and Godfrey hastened after and soon overtook them, and as they journeyed on, the Turks from all the towns fled before them, crying:

"Who may escape these people, so stubborn and cruel, whom neither famine, nor sword, nor plague, nor any other danger can resist?"

CHAPTER XXX

MINETTE AND AZZADIN.

NEARLY seven months had passed since Minette had so suddenly disappeared, at the very moment of exultation in the closing scene of the victory at Antioch. The day after the battle, the day on which the Crusaders were glutting themselves with the luxuries and wealth of Corbogha's camp, Lacey and L'Enfans had ridden a score of miles. They had swept through little hamlets, and passed the huts and caves of shepherds. On the hillsides were flocks and herds feeding, and lower down were partly gathered harvests, but except, here and there, some wounded Turk, already dying upon the plain, no sign of human life appeared. Wearily the two returned, and sore at heart Lacey hurried to the bedside of le Bon. Here hope rose again; and as he felt the gentle pressure of his friend's hand, heard his voice once more and saw the old smile upon his face, his faith and his courage saw the rose tints of another morning sure to dawn. And fifty miles away Minette was at that moment sitting in the room of a small house, listening to the sea waves that were beating

softly, almost against the building. Her face was like that of one which had been carved in stone.

Only the evening before, even while her arms were outstretched toward her deliverers, and her heart was bounding in an ecstasy of joy, rude hands snatched her away, and held by strong arms she was borne swiftly along out into the hopeless night. All the day she and Louise had held each other's hands, and listened to the sounds of battle; sounds that had swept through the air fiercer than the wild storm roars. Missiles of death had fallen around and near them, but they were not afraid. Then the cries of the Crusaders came louder and nearer. They saw the banners, and the white tunics, and the crosses.

One moment of heaven! and then she was swept away from its music and its love.

Close beside her rode the score of Moslems led by Azzadin. Bold men they were, and yet, till the end came, no one of them had struck a blow.

No hand may write of the agony that filled her heart. Have men souls, and do such deeds? And yet, it were less cruel than Christians had done at Antioch. An hour later, there were no sounds of pursuit; even the Moslem army, the magnificence of Corbogha, the Sultan himself; all had disappeared, vanished as completely as though they had never been. Till midnight Azzadin led the way toward the southwest; then at a small village, rested till morning. Minette had not slept, nor could she eat, and half fainting, she was placed in a small cart. Azzadin spoke kindly to her. Perhaps he had some pity, for he was not unlike other men, and those whose love is an absorbing passion are usually but selfish brutes.

The soft winds whispered among the leaves of the

trees in the groves through which they passed; the birds sang, and nature smiled and beamed over the green and gold, but Minette neither saw nor heard, and when the night had come and the door was closed upon her in that little room, she sat as one might who awaits death or torture.

One who is stunned by a blow oft recovers quickly. In the bosom of Minette, hope and faith, rudely assailed, lay sleeping, all unconscious. Then love came and wakened them, and rising suddenly, all the old stunned look passed away and her face shone with lofty courage. Turning toward a couch in the farther corner of the room, she knelt down in prayer, and then without fear, without a thought of lurking peril, she laid herself upon the couch.

The waves sang, and the soft winds that all the way from sunny France had toyed with them, entered the window and fanned her cheek, and brought with them a thousand fancies that floated into a dreamy maze; and out of these sleep rose, and with an embrace light as an angel's thought carried her back to her own room; back among the flowers, and the love and peace of Touraine.

Out in the darkness hearts may rage, and burn with passion; who shall say there is not something in that room, where innocence and piety lies unconscious, that is not stronger than they?

The following morning Minette arose, and going to the window, looked out upon the blue waters of the sea. The white caps foamed and sparkled in the sunlight, and the sight brought some gladness to her, for it took her away from herself. She talked to them as one alone talks to the trees and the birds, and when some one came with food she ate heartily. Then, when she had

finished, she lifted herself hastily into the cart which was already waiting, to avoid the touch of Azzadin, who would have helped her. The day passed; then night and day again. To Minette the scene was strange. There were homes beneath the ground, where those who tilled the soil dwelt, and curious hamlets, and larger cities in which dark faces gathered around.

The stars faded and the sun rose, and still they journeyed on. The broad plain, with its harvests and its groves of palms, disappeared, and they climbed slowly around rugged peaks. Great mountain cliffs towered about them, and turning toward the east they followed little brooklets that bubbled from mountain springs, and sporting awhile apart, flowed together in the descending valley. The mountain wall on either side made her dizzy, and Minette heard Azzadin say they were in the valley of the Leontes.

Three days they rode along the river bank; then the mountains sloped away, and they heard the waves beat again and saw the sea that in the distance seemed to paint the sky with a deeper blue. Along the shore they journeyed on. Days had become weeks. Far behind, the Crusade seemed to Minette a dream, yet Jerusalem was not so far away.

Late one afternoon, on the 15th of July, they came near a great city. The western sun, close to the water's edge, gilded its towers and temple spires. Entering the northern gate, they passed on by crowds of curious faces, and stopping before the palace of the Governor, some one came out to meet them. He talked with Azzadin many minutes; then returning to the palace, another, who seemed to be an officer, came and conducted them to a house not far away. Around it were shaded spots where children were playing. An old man came, and

assisting Minette from the cart, led her within, and a moment later she was alone. The door closed upon her and though there was no bolt drawn, nor were there bars at the windows, through which the twilight glimmered softly, she felt it was a prison. A slave came with lights and food, and she ate, talking the while to herself, and trying to think over the scenes and the miles now left behind, and wondering when the Crusaders would come. Poor, tired, trusting heart! Happy that she had no doubt!

In the morning she rose early, and going to the window, looked out upon the tall palms. There were birds singing and the music pleased her. Opposite was the sea, and she wondered at the great circular wall of stone built out into the waters, and at the curious looking ships that floated lazily within. Then the same slave came with her morning meal. An hour later Azzadin entered. Alone with him she was frightened, but her woman's tact hid it from him, and she looked inquiringly. His eyes frightened her the more, and his voice trembled, but he spoke kindly, and said:

"Do not fear. Here you are safe. I am going away, perhaps for many days, perhaps for weeks. Those who have ridden with us, you may not see, but they will guard you from every danger. Ask for whatever you wish. The old man you saw can speak with you." Then he moved toward her quickly. 'Twas but a step. His eyes shone with sudden fire. His hands shook, and turning abruptly, he left the room.

Minette sank upon a chair. Her face was very white. Fear taunts and grips the tighter when the danger is past. The storm had come very close, but not a breath had touched her, and when the terror had passed away she went again to the window. Scarce twenty feet away

a boat rested on the water. Some one was in it, seemingly waiting. Then she saw Azzadin come, and sitting beside the other, the two rowed out to one of the ships, and climbing upon it, the sails were spread and the vessel slowly passed out through an opening in the great wall. Then it turned toward the west, and growing smaller in the distance, she watched it, until a mere speck, she could not distinguish it from the waves, and after it had disappeared, she still sat, and looking over the far-away waves, hoped the ship might sail on and on forever.

And as the vessel sped onward Azzadin walked the deck gloomily. Within his bosom were secrets that pleased him the less when he thought of the sweet face of the Christian now hidden in Caesarea.

The second morning the ship entered the harbor at the Nile. In a little while, a boat with twenty oars answered his signals, and taking him on board rapidly passed up the river. At Cairo he was landed and taken to a large building on whose stone walls were carved curious figures. Two guards attended him to a richly decorated room, where a number of woman attendants stood, waiting the commands of one who seemed of high authority. Covering their faces, they withdrew, and then a voice exclaimed:

"So you have come? The time, then, has arrived?"

"It has."

"The Caliph has been apprised, and waits you impatiently. Let us not delay," and taking Azzadin's arm, the Grand Vizier, for it was he who spoke, attended him through a broad corridor to the audience room of the palace.

The two prostrated themselves before a fierce-looking

Moslem, whose eager expression relieved a naturally haughty face, and then rising, the Vizier said:

"It is Azzadin, most noble Mostali, and he hath such news as will be pleasing to you."

"Allah Ackbar!" cried the Caliph; "let your speech be short, for we have waited long for some sign."

Prostrating himself again, Azzadin then related to the two listeners the disaster that had attended Corbogha's army; its utter ruin and the defenceless condition of Jerusalem.

"If," said he,"my silence has not been equal to my desire, it is because I would bring you no uncertain news. Before the next third quarter of the moon you may enter the Holy City."

"You speak well," said the Caliph, "and I forgive the doubts I had of thee. Let the army march at once, Afdhel, and go thyself with them. The sons of Malek Shah are unworthy the sacred inheritance, and we will wrest it from them as did Omar from the wine-loving Christians. But what sayest thou, Azzadin, of these Crusaders?"

"A frenzied host!" was the reply; "madmen! careless alike of hardships or peril. Some strange fury pushes them on. They have long lances, and where no foe is in sight, they fight one with the other. Nor thirst, nor famine, battle nor pestilence, nor any form of human suffering, may stay their zeal. I have been told, that tortured by hunger, they ate the bodies of the dead. Priests march with them, kindling each day a fiercer passion; and women, with hair and eyes witchingly beautiful, heal their wounds."

"Women!" exclaimed Mostali, "and beautiful! God is Great! My own slaves are less favored than were their wont. The fairest of these of whom you speak shall

take their places; and of the men, let them continue their march. Those who live will serve me better that they fear not danger. Go, thyself, Afdhel, with the army. Seize the Holy City; expel the false usurpers who, in the East, pretend to the power and glory of our religion, and when they shall come, deal thou with these Crusaders so there shall not one return to tell the story of their fate. And for thy loyal service, Azzadin, what may I do that shall give thee pleasure?"

"Thy favor is the highest gift possible to thee."

"That thou hast already. Go, now, both of you, and let me hear good tidings within the month."

And so Jerusalem changed masters, while the Christians quarreled over the spoils of Antioch and nursed their unworthy ambitions to become, each prince and petty chief, rulers of Moslem cities.

A month has passed away since the morning on which Minette had watched the vessel which bore Azzadin away over the western waters. Except the old man and the slave who brought her meals no one had spoken to her. The former had been kind, and the latter, an Armenian Christian, had often made the hours pass more lightly, telling her of Caesarea, and of his own home and people. Sympathy for this lonely heart made her stronger. He could not tell her more of the Crusade than she already knew, for since the battle of Antioch, little save wild and extravagant tales had come from the north. It surprised her to know she was so near Jerusalem, and as he told her of its beauty, its sacred places and its wondrous scenes, something of the old light came into her eyes and she forgot for the moment her own misery. No one appeared to watch her movements, and in the cooler hours of the day she walked in the gardens about the house, or stood at the edge of

the shore, looking out upon the sea while the waters crept, playfully, almost to her feet. She saw children playing about, and people outside the low vine-covered walls. Sometimes they noticed her curiously, but when she looked they turned away. None spoke.

It seemed to her, each day, that the sorrowful dream would end and that Lacey would come, and that she should see her father and Louise. She had almost forgotten Azzadin, when one evening just as the Armenian, who had come with her food, was departing, he still appeared to linger, and thinking he might have something more to say, she looked around and saw the dark and serious face of the Moslem.

"Do not rise," he exclaimed, as he saw her quick, startled movement. "I have returned within the hour, and hope it may please you to know that we shall go tomorrow to Jerusalem. We shall start early and rest on the way, while the sun is hottest, reaching the Holy City in the evening. A place, which I hope may not be displeasing, has already been provided there for you."

Minette bowed, but made no answer, and with a smile, foreign to his solemn face, in which, too, there was something of disappointment, something of vexation, Azzadin turned away. And long after he had gone, she sat, and looking out into the deepening twilight, thought of the Crusade, of those who had already died, of her own misery and grief, and wondered, as she had once before, looking out upon the evening sky that night, long ago at Touraine, if it was right.

Daylight came with its grey and its song of birds and murmur of waking life. The little company of Moslems were already at the house, and Minette bravely lifted herself into the cart, on which Azzadin had fastened a shade to protect her from the burning sun. She noticed

it and thought it was kind of him; and then she felt something like pity; pity for him; she knew not why. Perhaps it was the shadow of what was coming.

The day was drawing to a close. All around them were hills, and here and there, groves of cedar. Now they are passing a mound higher than the others. Azzadin rides beside the cart, and pointing it out, speaks in a friendly way.

"There," said he "is the 'watch tower.' Heard you ever of 'Mizpah?' The Jews, who dwell in the city, say that the Mosque you see upon the summit covers the tomb of their prophet Samuel; and now look before you."

Minette turned, and there, its palaces and domes, its towers and walls and spires flashing in golden tints from the rays of the declining sun, was the city she had seen in her dreams a hundred times.

"It is the Holy City!" she cried.

"So say each Jew and Moslem," replied Azzadin.

Minette did not hear. She sat gazing upon the scene before her like one in a trance. In that one instant and all the way to the old "corner gate" she forgot her captivity; all its misery and grief, its possible horror. The boundless heavens seemed fanned by angels' wings. The air trembled with celestial voices, and divine music floated in dreamy waves, far and near, through all the space above and around her.

Azzadin gazed upon her, bewildered. Sensations that were new and strange to him, came and touched a chord in his heart, a thread so slender that it held them but a moment, and then, like one intoxicated, his dark face lighted with a crimson glow, his eyes shone and desperate passion burned in his soul.

"AZZADIN RIDES BESIDE THE CART, * * * 'THERE,' SAID HE, 'IS THE WATCH TOWER.'"

He turned his face away, muttering: "Yet I would first try to win her love," and when they had entered the "old gate," he said, kindly as before:

"Just behind you is the site of the old amphitheatre of Herod. Perhaps you have read of it, and now we are coming to the Holy Sepulchre. It is just within the garden yonder. You can see the entrance where the Moslem soldier stands with his sword drawn. One who did not know the spot would pass without seeing it; and there, just to the south, is Golgotha, some call it Calvary, where He you call the Saviour is said to have been crucified."

Minette made no reply. In that moment eleven centuries of time were rolled backward.

"And here across the way," continued Azzadin, "was the 'gate of judgment.' Now as we turn toward the east you are facing the site of the temple, where the Mosque of Omar stands. It was built on the 'sacred rock' from which Mahomet ascended into heaven; at least, so the faithful say. No, do not turn that way," he suddenly cried to the officer in front. "That leads to the palace. By heaven! Afdhel must not see her. Take the road to the triple gate."

A little farther along they stopped at a building that seemed to be but a portion of some larger structure; some part that had been rebuilt. There were parts of lower walls around it and some great stones lying about.

"Here," said Azzadin, "is where we shall stop. It is the palace of Agrippa; all that is left of it, and this part that has been restored will be none the less pleasing that it is shorn of some of the luxuries of its former occupants. But before you enter perhaps you would like to walk to yonder tower. 'Twas once called the 'tower that lieth out.' You may see a strange sight there."

Ever since they had passed the heights of Mizpah, Minette had been like one in a dream. She was living in the past, and had forgotten for the moment to be afraid of Azzadin. Without a word she followed him, and together they mounted the tower, and when they were at the top he said:

"Look first behind you at the city. There to the west was the 'house of lepers.' Not so far away was the palace of Caiaphas. A little this way you see where the ancient theater and baths stood. There was where Peter addressed the multitude on the day of Pentecost. It was in a covered colonnade, built by the high priest Jason, who I have heard was a man none too careful of his morals. Near by was the 'house of the mighty,' and there was the 'house of the Nithinim,' servants of the temple. Just south of it was where the tithes were collected, and there, near the wall, was the residence of the king's chamberlain. Here, nearer by, were Solomon's stables. Now cast your eye beyond the wall. Over there is the valley of Hinnom, where fires burned; fires that were never quenched. There the dead were thrown, a hundred and sixteen thousand of them, killed by the Roman Titus centuries ago. Turn now, and cast your eye nearer. There was the 'pool of Siloam.' Strange contrast! There is the 'gate of the sun,' whence one could depart for Hinnom. It was there the brazen idol was worshiped; the idol of 'Baal.' Now turn your face and look below."

"Oh!" cried Minette, as she involuntarily stepped backward and leaned against the wall of the tower, frightened at the appalling sight of the abyss that yawned before her.

Azzadin scarcely noticed her quick movement. His

serious face seemed even more solemn than was his wont.

"There," said he, "is the place where Jew and Moslem and Christian alike, believe the final judgment will be held. 'Twas called Jehoshaphat."

Then moving to the very edge of the wall, half stooping, and with his arms extended behind him, his hands tightly clenched, he gazed into the depths and continued, as if talking to himself:

"I know not what irresistible power draws me here. Each time I enter the city some fascination, some strange impulse, urges me to this spot. Always at this hour, too, and as I look downward, the same fearful thought tempts me. 'Tis a weird spot. A-h-h! let us go down."

In a few minutes they had descended and entered the restored wing of the old palace. "Here, I will now leave you, for a time," exclaimed Azzadin, "for I must go to the Vizier. This palace is to be your own. Slaves will attend your call. Order them as you will."

Just north of the old temple square, almost touching the lofty gateway, spanning the "via Dolorosa," where Pilate, pointing to the Saviour, who already wore the "crown of thorns," said: "Behold the man," was a palace of more recent structure, and in a richly ornamented room the Grand Vizier was impatiently walking to and fro. The heavy drapery that concealed the entrance was pushed aside and Azzadin entered. Turning toward him Afdhel exclaimed, abruptly:

"You are long in coming!"

"The road from Caesarea is not easy, and the day has been hottest of the summer. Even yet the dust is upon my garments."

"'Tis my anxiety chides thee, for we have much at stake. Thou knowest the danger. We hold the city,

but 'tis not one foe alone with whom we have to deal. I have sent messengers to the Christians, offering them free entrance to the city if they come without arms, but I fear their old temper and pride still rule them. Our old enemy in the east must still be powerful, for you tell me but a hundred thousand of Corbogha's men were killed at Antioch. We must know what means the silence of the sons of Malek Shah. They still trust thee, nor have they learned aught of thy service to Mostali. With tomorrow's dawn I would have thee start. Go to Damascus. If there be any news in that city send a trusty messenger and continue on your journey to Bagdad. It is a long ride, but there will be time. Thou art wise and crafty. Urge the pretenders to quarrel among themselves. Do what you will, so you but keep them afar, till I have settled with these Crusaders."

"Tomorrow is sudden, and I have had little rest," replied Azzadin, with no little annoyance.

"But the matter is urgent," exclaimed the Vizier. "A day may be too late. I promise thou shalt have rest, and leave to do all thy heart desires, on thy return."

"It shall be so then, and I take thee at thy word."

"Farewell! good Azzadin; hasten at the dawn. The Caliph trusts thee, and I, better than he, know thy worth. And here! take this purse. 'Tis well filled and thou mayest need it."

Scarce realizing for a time her new and strange situation, in which she, first of all the Crusaders, had entered the Holy City, Minette found her way to a room she was to occupy in the palace. Everything about the place was arranged to please. Nothing was left to be desired. Nothing but freedom from the unknown peril of her situation; and love. A slave came with lights, but she

did not notice him, and as she sat silently looking away from the luxury with which she was surrounded, out into the darkness, her soul was miles and miles away.

How long a time had passed she knew not; an hour, perhaps it might be two; she took no account of time. There were steps, as though of one in doubt; a noise at the door, and then, turning at the sound, she saw Azzadin. She rose, startled by the look upon his face. It frightened her. Dark, unreadable, suggesting, yet concealing the thoughts within, his presence filled her with an awful sense of dread, a terror such as might come to one alone with a tiger.

For a moment, the quick, heavy beating of her heart seemed to be choking her; then thought flashed rapidly through her mind. There was no escape. Even if there had been some avenue through which she could fly, where, in all that sacred city, was there a spot in which she could have been safe from even greater peril? Whatever struggle was before her; whatever fate threatened, she must meet it alone; conquer it or fall, and trying to calm the nerves that were quivering, calling to her aid every noble quality of her soul, she stood waiting.

The Moslem seemed to hesitate. Looking upon that sweet face, words were not so easy as he thought. He trembled, as the hunter, who, ready to kill, stands before the deer that can no longer fly, and as he began to speak, his own voice seemed strange to him.

"I have come to tell you," he said, "that I am going away. I thought you would be glad to know; nor do I mean that, but rather that it may please you when I shall return."

"Does the heart of a prisoner flow with joy?" she replied. "Were you ever captive?"

"One of your own people prompted the deed that

placed you in Moslem hands. It was not I who tore you away."

"Yet at Antioch I were rescued but for you."

"Do not say that. There was in that moment danger to you, deadly peril. I did but save you from it."

"Better for me I had been killed by flying spear or lance, than captive, borne away from my father, from those that love me."

"Thyself did say the words. Love thee! It is for that I have brought you here; away from those who were careless of your safety. Is there love like mine? Have I not shielded you, saved you from every wrong? Look upon me! See how my face glows, my eyes kindle with passion. Do not turn away. The absence of your eyes covers me with darkness. Give me some hope."

"Say no more; go! It is impossible."

"Have a care! Do not drive me to frenzy. Ah! no; do not look like that. I did not mean to frighten you. Give me but a smile, that I may dream away the long days of my absence. I will make thee happiest, as thou art already loveliest of women. Slaves thou shalt have, thousands, and I will be chiefest of all. I will not, even, ask all of thy love. Give me but a part. Thou shalt be a queen. Flowers shall bloom around thee, and thou shalt have costly gems. I will be thy captive as, thou sayest, thou art now mine. More! Thou knowest me not. Already I serve two masters; so they each think. For thee I will strike them both, and become a Christian. I care not so I but have thy love, and I will fight with the Crusaders, and they shall win the prize thy heart is set upon. Say only that thou wilt smile upon me, and let thy dark eyes sparkle, glad when I shall return. And then let me press thy hand, and, coming nearer, hold thee close, that I may feel thy heart beating,

and see thy face burning, flushed with a new joy, that perchance, terrifies thy modest soul."

"Stop! do not speak such words," cried Minette, with both hands raised, the palms extended, as if to push away some horrid spectre, some fearful thing, whose power, already encircling, was crushing her.

"I will not listen."

The light went out from Azzadin's face. His smile vanished. His teeth and lips pressed together. Rage and fury darkened the ruddy hue of his cheeks. His eyes blazed with insane passion, and, springing toward her, he cried:

"Then I will seize thee now, for love has maddened me."

Ah God! for one moment of Lacey!

It was not needed. Who shall say souls of the dead come no more around us? In that one intense, terrible moment, all the lofty, noble courage of her father flowed into the heart of Minette. She felt his very presence, and turning not away, nor shrinking, her slender figure rose and towered. Not a muscle quivered. No coward nerve ruffled her calm, determined face. Her delicate hands were tightly clenched, and herself advancing, as if she would first assail, her flashing eyes caught those of the furious savage, bent and held them down, and with her face so close to his he could feel her breath upon his cheek, the defiant answer came:

"You cannot."

They were words that burned, that conquered. Vainly the Moslem struggled to free himself from the power of those eyes that had fastened themselves upon his soul. The strong man cowered. His arms dropped, his muscles, nerves, refused him aid. He moved backward, un-

steadily as a drunken man; then turning, he fled from the room.

It was the battle of a soul, and the brave soul won.

And then the woman came again. Beautiful Minette; lovely now in her weakness and her tears, as she had been grand in her noble courage. All her strength had been gathered for the struggle. Exhausted in the victory, and now limp and quivering, she sank upon her knees by the chair in which she had sat when the Moslem entered, and resting her face between her hands, her sobs and prayers went out into the darkness.

The night winds bore over the sacred places of the Holy City the wailing of that tortured heart, and as the minutes passed, the sobbing died away in the sounds without.

Not far away, Azzadin walked with feverish step in the half-deserted street; walked till the tower he had climbed but a few hours before with Minette rose before him. Just beyond the high wall was that which had ever so strangely fascinated him. Starting at the thought, he asked himself again, just as he had done a hundred times before, why the uncanny spot haunted, yet ever attracted him, and shuddering, nor knowing why, he turned away, back toward the palace his love he thought had prepared for her. Passion raged again, and then there came a feeling new and strange to him; some thought of pity, for love, selfish though it be, is a builder of soul.

"Fool!" he muttered to himself, "that I should have been so hasty, so mad. She was beginning to draw nearer. In me was safety. Confidence would have followed; from that to love is but a step, and now my rashness has frightened her away. She was grand though. What eyes! By Allah! my nerves are not

stilled yet. Never did man live that I would so turn my back upon, yet my love burns the more fiercely that she so bravely ruled me from her presence. But I will have her, though it were but an hour and hell gaped beyond. My men are trusty, and I need few with me; the rest shall guard and treat her kindly till I return. Then——"

CHAPTER XXXI

JERUSALEM

BACK still in Syria the Crusaders marched, and quarreled as they marched, hundreds of miles away. Stronger now than ever the holy craze pushed them on, even though they fought and vied with each other who should possess each hamlet, town and city through which they passed. Two at least, there were among them who cared little for petty strife, for conquest. Always in the advance, foremost in every city and village, restless, untiring, Lacey and le Bon rode, seeking, inquiring of those who remained for some trace of the lost loved one.

A slave not far from Emessa told them of a woman, very beautiful, who, guarded by soldiers, was driven rapidly through the village where he lived, but 'twas so long ago he could not remember more. It was not much; just a momentary gleam and then the light went out again. There was another, too, no less weary than themselves, who sought and rode, often far away from the Christians. It was not that Guibert pitied or would yet save Minette, but he would know, and as he rode, he vainly asked for Bagi. Few knew the chief and none had seen him since the battle at Antioch. Nor were

any soldiers found, save a few remaining in the citadels of the towns, and these mostly fled as those came they had learned to fear as well as hate. And far away, as Guibert rode, there was one who often followed and watched him, oft saying to himself, as his hand rested in a friendly way upon the handle of his sword:

"It is not yet time, but they shall let me kill him."

One day there were strangers, who covered with dust, as though they had traveled long, approached, and as the chiefs gathered around, they said:

"The great Caliph, he who is the true upholder of the prophet's kingdom, would be friendly to you. Return your soldiers and come to the Holy City when you will; enter without battle, visit as you like, and have such free pilgrimage to its sacred places as please you. Yet come without arms."

"Such may not be. Jerusalem shall be ours, to do with as God instructs," was the stern reply.

"But the Caliph will do more, for he is well disposed, since your arms have weakened his enemies so that he hath already entered the city, his by divine right. He will give you great wealth. The Grand Vizier promises in his name sixty thousand pieces of gold to him, who among you, is called Bohemond, forty thousand each to Godfrey and Raymond, and an amount to each of your other chiefs as shall seem fitting to his noble rank, and he will make you other presents of rare gems, so you come no farther."

A storm of indignation burst forth.

"Think you," exclaimed Raymond, "we can be bought with gold? That we have no higher purpose? Be grateful, that we forgive thy folly and thy insolence; return to thy impious master, and tell him that all the

wealth of Jerusalem will soon be ours; the Holy Sepulchre; all its sacred places."

"And tell him," cried Tancred, "his insulting words will hasten our march, and that if he dare remain within the city, we will burst through its walls, and blood shall flow in its streets to our horses' knees. Tell him, further, to look well to his kingdom on the Nile. Cairo is not so far away."

The envoys were about to reply, but their words were drowned in a roar of angry voices, and fearing for their lives, they hastily departed, nor were they ever seen again.

The event was not without value to the Crusaders. It fanned into fiercer flames that human passion, out of which the Crusade had been born, and as Tancred had said, it did hasten their march.

And so the days passed, and when the winter was at an end the Christian army had entered Palestine. From Tyre and Sidon and other cities of the coast, they had drawn supplies of food, and all the way to Caesarea they marched along the shore, and listened to the waters that beat in the winter's storm, or shimmered under the summer moonlight along the shores of France. Behind them were tears and mourning.

It was early in June, 1099, when they reached Caesarea. Some ships of traders from Pisa had just arrived and were slowly entering the great mole built out into the sea. The Crusaders waited a day that they might purchase such food as the vessels carried. Lacey sat upon the shore, looking with curious eyes at the strange harbor. It was one of those moments, which sometimes come to us all, when he wanted to be alone, and as he sat, he wondered what secrets might be told by the massive wall that rose up out of the water. Near him

was a house, and there were gardens whose flowers filled the air with fragrant perfume. Some one came from the house and stood near him, looking at the ships. The man was not a Crusader, nor did he seem to be a Moslem. In some strange humor he spoke to him and learned that he was a slave. He asked him of the city.

"I have lived here many years," the man said, "here in this house. The Moslem who purchased me was an old man who left just before you came. I concealed myself in a boat and floated out beyond the harbor till he was gone, for I am a Christian and knew you were coming."

"Then you shall go with us if you like," said Lacey.

"Give me but arms," the man cried, "and I will not disappoint you, even though you fight as you did at Antioch."

"At Antioch! how knew you of the battle?"

"Many from this place went with the Emir of Jerusalem, and joined the army of Corbogha. I know not how many there were, but we were told the Sultan had a million soldiers. We heard no more till one day, long after, a band of Moslem soldiers came. They brought with them a captive, a woman, fairer than any I have ever seen. She was a prisoner in this house for more than a month. The first night I heard the poor thing sobbing herself to sleep. The morning after they came, the chief went away in a ship. Day after day, she would sit at the window you see yonder, and look out over the sea. I brought her food. She shrank away, frightened like at first, but after I had told her my own story, she seemed pleased when I came, and one day she told me of the battle and how the Crusaders had fought."

Lacey had sprung to his feet and stood gazing at the man with staring eyes.

"And what became of her?" he cried.

"I do not know. When the chief finally returned, they took her away. No one knows where, but I saw them leave the city on the road to Jerusalem."

"And did you not learn her name?"

"I never heard it spoken."

"The chief's, then?"

"Azzadin."

"Come with me," cried Lacey, and seizing the man's arm he hurried him along, through the streets of the city toward the camp of the Crusaders, nor did he stop till he reached the quarters of Bohemond. In a tent, near that of the Duke, Louise sat talking with Tancred and le Bon. Their faces were very serious. Suddenly the folds of the tent were parted and Lacey entered, exclaiming:

"She has been here, here in this very city. I have seen the house where she remained more than a month, the window where day after day she sat. This man brought her food and talked with her. When they took her away they left on the road to Jerusalem. A hundred times I have dreamed I should find her there. She is waiting, waiting there, while her heart breaks. Why do we not go forward, Tancred?"

And they each eagerly questioned the man, a score of times, making him repeat, again and again, every word he could remember, she had said. Then while the others talked and joyed together, in this faint trace, Tancred became silent, and walked to and fro, with thoughtful face; and when they noticed him, and ceased their joy, he approached Lacey and folding his arms, said in a pained, sad, hesitating way:

"Lacey, you are a man, a knight. Honor and piety hold the heart of one of your degree. If grief must

come, grief that love may not remove, you will bear it bravely. Many, many months have passed since Minette was torn away, swept into a raging sea, whose waves destroy, yet do not kill. The Moslem spares not beauty. God alone knows what may have happened, and there is a vengeance worse than death."

Scarcely breathing, Louise stood, like a statue, and looked at Lacey. Slowly the knight lifted his head. His tall figure seemed to rise higher than them all. His face shone with a light such as comes only from a noble soul. Never had he seemed so grand.

"Honor!" he cried, "Does honor forget? Love! Is love, then, no quality of the soul? Does the sun refuse to shine upon the plant the fierce storm has stripped of its blossom? Does the mother turn from her babe torn by a serpent's fangs? I know not what harm, what seeming ruin, hath touched her with relentless hand; what matters it; so she but live, she is Minette."

Not till that moment, since the fatal night at Antioch, when Minette so strangely disappeared, had Louise smiled. Springing forward, she threw her arms around Lacey's neck and cried:

"I love you, cousin."

And hers was the face of an angel.

The delay, even of a day, was a sore trial to Lacey. Nor was it any the less to his friend, for le Bon loved the daughter of the Count even as he had her father, in the old days when the doors of the chateau of Touraine were ever open to him. First of all the impatient ones, on the following morning rode the two, who had at heart something vastly more noble than the Crusade. The journey was slow, for the road grew rougher, and it was the second day before the heights of Mizpah rose

before them. Peter knew the spot, and his frantic joy pointed it out. There they rested for the night.

The hour was late and the camp was still, for the Crusaders were sleeping; yet Lacey sat talking with Louise. She was uneasy, and many times looked without, listening as if for some sound. At last she said:

"I wonder our friend does not come."

"Some duty keeps him away, or perhaps he thinks you should rest. He may be sleeping, yet his step will be first when morning breaks. Never was nobler knight, nor truer friend. I wish I were sure you loved him, cousin."

But le Bon was not sleeping. Long before, even while the first shadows were gathering, he had ridden out beyond the camp. In the months that had passed since Louise had been found, he had thought himself happy, and yet he was restless. She had nursed him with loving care till his wound was healed. Perhaps she would have done it for any other. In all the days he had suffered with the pain, he had never heard her say that she loved him. Strange, he should not think that he had never asked her. Had he loved her less it would have been easier. Once he had seen Tancred holding her hand. Somehow it hurt him, yet he loved her as well, nor would his heart complain if he knew she were happier with him.

As he rode along, perhaps there might have been something of sadness in his thoughts, and he hardly noticed that he was passing beyond the hill until he suddenly saw, in the dim moonlight, not so far away, the indistinct outlines of the Holy City. It startled him at first, then he rode on, more slowly than before. An hour passed, and he was close to the city's walls, so near he could hear the voices of the soldiers who were within.

Something in the silence about filled him with awe. All around were barren hills, stripped of the verdure that once covered them. One solitary tree, nearby, alone remained. What scenes had swept the hillsides! What feet had trodden the path where he stood! What memories were within the city! What secrets were hidden within its sacred walls! Was Minette really there, and where was she hidden away?

These were the thoughts that were passing through his mind. Some sound startled him. It was the quick tread of horse's feet, and he drew back nearer the tree. Its thin branches would not hide him, yet he looked grey and ghostly in the moonlight, whose cold rays glimmered through them. Looking toward the spot whence the sound came, he saw a horseman coming from the east. Perhaps an enemy, he thought. It mattered little. There was but one. The rider had not noticed him, and he came nearer. Le Bon turned his head and the moon shone with pale light upon his face. Nearer yet; the horseman is but a dozen yards away. Suddenly he stopped, and looked full at the motionless figure of the knight. One moment he sat as though he had been turned to stone; then, with an expression of terror, he pressed his feet against the sides of his horse and fled toward the Crusaders' camp.

"Guibert!" exclaimed le Bon.

It was the first time they had met since the battle of Antioch. Le Bon turned, and rode slowly after him, saying in a low, soft way:

"He thinks he has seen a ghost; 'tis some punishment, but my spirit may yet trouble him further."

And urging his horse to a faster gait, he soon turned around the hill that shut off the view of the city, and moving carefully among the sleeping forms of the Cru-

saders, he reached his own quarters. Then removing the trappings from his horse, and stroking the patient animal's head affectionately, he was about to turn away when some one, whose step he had not heard, touched his arm.

"Ha!" he cried, "is it you, L'Enfans? I thought you were sleeping."

"And so I should have been, except— But you have been beyond the hills yourself. Odd I did not meet you, and yet, not so strange either, since I returned where your horse would scarcely have climbed. I have been waiting, for I have something on my mind you ought to know. I have seen Guibert."

"Guibert? Ah!"

"Yes. You remember Godfrey first arrived at the camp. Bohemond was next, and my own quarters were near Godfrey, fully a mile from where we stand. I was bringing some feed for my horse, for I love the brute, when I saw Guibert riding away toward the road from whence I watched you coming. Some motive, I said, must call him forth, so I followed him. He soon turned toward the east, and rode slowly, as if not certain of the way. I had no difficulty in keeping near as I dared. He did not keep the road, but circled among the hills. I never saw so many—and all the time we were drawing nearer the city. Finally he disappeared behind a low ridge, and I hurried forward. I almost ran onto him, for he had stopped, and was waiting for some one who came toward him. I dropped to the ground. Fortunately, the shallow bed of a brook, in which water had some time flowed, cut the foot of the ridge near him, and creeping along within it, I came so close I could almost have touched him. Raising my head cautiously, I could

see the man approaching was a Moslem. Guibert had dismounted, and I heard him say:

"'Is it then you, Bagi?'

"The Moslem did not reply at once, but taking hold of the long whiskers that nearly covered his breast, they suddenly parted from his face. I knew him at once, for I rode against him when he attacked Bohemond at Doryleum. Then he answered:

"'I feared I should not see you, for it was but an hour ago the messenger I sent when you were at Caesarea, returned. Matters have sadly changed, and were it known within the city who I am I should be no safer there than yourself.'

"'And Azzadin; where is he?' replied Guibert.

"'Azzadin is a traitor, false to those who trusted him. A curse go to the solemn dog! His heart is with our enemy. 'Tis on his account I am here, and if I but return in time his lying tongue shall be cut out.'

"'What has become of——'

"'The girl? She is in the city. 'Twas for himself, Azzadin fled with her. I have seen her twice. She is in a house, where once the king's palace stood, on the street opposite the mosque in the temple square, guarded by those false as the traitor himself. He thinks his secret safe, but if Afdhel should see her—well, 'twould be a just punishment.'

"I had heard enough, and turned to creep away, but hardly arrived at the edge of the hollow when Guibert rode by and I heard him muttering to himself:

"'Let her suffer; it is the ruin I promised her. Now for the other.'

"Then, when he was out of sight, I took a shorter route over the hills and reached the camp first. Guibert came soon after. As he came near I noticed a strange

look of terror on his face, and he turned his head as though fearful of something he could not see."

"In a house opposite the mosque," exclaimed le Bon thoughtfully; then taking L'Enfans' hand affectionately, he continued:

"You have done a noble work tonight. Tell it to Lacey in the morning. Let him sleep now. Good night."

Float softly through the dreams of night. It was the morning of the tenth of June, and dawn was just breaking when the Crusaders began again to climb around the hills. An hour passed, and emerging from the heights, Jerusalem, the coveted prize, appeared before them. They stood as though beholding a vision. Some wept, while others laughed in their joy, and some fell upon their knees and prayed. In that one moment, no one thought of the many years that were past. Time, hunger, thirst, battle and pestilence; these were forgotten. A remnant only of the vast multitude, that three years before had left France, stood there upon the barren hillside, barefooted, pointing to the city, yet scarce daring to look. The sun just risen, turned its streets and towers into gold, and angels seemed to stand invitingly at the gates. They advance nearer. The vision of gold fades. The seeming angels are but men, and they stand at the gates and upon the walls with angry faces and sharp weapons.

Four days the Crusaders lingered near the city and listened to the scoffs and jeers and taunts of the Moslems. Then, in their gathering rage they rushed madly upon the walls. In desperate assault, they overthrew a part, and had nearly entered; but the infidel foe, fighting with as terrible passion, drove them away. Defeat and blood angered them the more, but it taught them wis-

dom. Beams they must have, and engines for battering down the walls. Faint hope appeared over those treeless hills, yet they searched far and near, and one day Lacey and le Bon discovered a cave. Entering they found large beams already cut, concealed there. They hastened to Tancred, and he sent men with oxen, which drew them to the camp. Then, the wood near Sichem was found, and they began to build engines and movable turrets.

And now thirst came. All the wells around had been filled up by the Moslems, for Afdhel had not been idle while they were coming. Rivulets and fountains and springs, were dry. Here and there, were dug wells which furnished scant supply. Then hunger came, and the animals began to die and taint the air, yet nothing daunted, nothing stayed the purpose of these iron-hearted men. From Joppa some Genoese came and brought food and better engines. A ravine near the city forbade their approach. They filled it with stones. Lacey and le Bon, most earnest of all, worked with the common soldiers; L'Enfans, too, for he knew how those two hearts burned with every day's delay.

And as they worked the Moslems issued from the gates, and fell upon them, but they labored on and fought as they worked. Noblest of the four chiefs was Tancred. Piety and zeal had not weakened, but love had broadened his soul. If he had spoken harshly to the envoys, it was but a momentary passion. One day he went alone upon the Mount of Olives to pray. Five Moslems sprang out from the walls and attacked him. Only two returned; the others lay dead in the spot where he had prayed.

Nearer and nearer, these indomitable Christian souls

approached the walls. Thirty-four days they had suffered and toiled. Why should they wait longer?

The knights and all those who gathered around the standards of Godfrey already held the western slope of Mount Calvary; Bohemond and Tancred continued the line around to the northwest, and Raymond's forces reached to the foot of Mount Zion. If, to the south, the torrent of the Cedron, the dread valley of Hinnom and the precipices around Jehoshaphat warned them away, so too these alike were friendly obstacles, since in the approaching conflict they might frown equally upon those within the city.

It was the morning of the fourteenth of July.

The evening before, all the chiefs became reconciled to each other and forgave the petty quarrels and feuds their former greed had fostered. Each of the knights and common soldiers shook hands, and the music of sacred chant and prayer floated out upon the air. Each man renewed within his own heart the oath he had taken, and they walked with solemn faces around the city, stopping to pray at all the places made holy by divine presence. No one doubted, no one feared.

The time had come, and at daybreak the assault began. The great beams pounded upon the walls, white banners waved, and the cheers and cries of these determined Christians woke the doomed ones within the city. Spears crossed each other in mad flight, and arrows whistled and sung as they cut the air. From the gates bands of Moslems rushed. Then lance and sword rang. Blood flowed and men died; Christian and Moslem. Turret and engine stayed not their work, and here and there, breaches were made in the walls, and filled as quickly, for the hate of the Saracen burned as fiercely as the rage and passion of the Christian; nor was he less

brave. All day long the battle raged, and when only the red glow tinted the western sky, the Crusaders rested, and panting, still gazed angrily upon the walls that defied their strength.

Then the infidel gathered, and from the towers and stones, scoffed and taunted them, and brought crosses and images which they spat upon, and threw among the Christians. Curses flew back at them, and inflamed with the old passion, Peter cried:

"Ye see, ye hear the blasphemies of the enemies of God! Now this I swear to you by your faith, by the arms you carry. Tonight these infidels are still full of pride and insolence, but tomorrow they shall be frozen with fear, and the mosques, which tower over Christian ruins, shall serve for temples to the true God. Jerusalem shall hear no longer aught but praises of our Lord."

The shouts of the Christians followed his words, and when, with chant and prayer, they retired to their quarters, the Moslems scoffed the more, and jested merrily with each other.

Poor fools! better had they waited till the morrow.

The Crusaders scarce waited for the dawn. Fiercer than ever the battle went on. The walls shook under the terrible blows of the heavy beams. A dozen times, before the hour of noon, the Christians had almost entered, and each time fierce eyes had looked for a moment into each other.

To Lacey every moment of delay was fraught with terror. If Minette should again be torn away before he could reach and save her. The awful possibility made him reckless of danger. Few struck such blows as he, yet they were not for the Holy Sepulchre. Little he thought of the zeal that had once filled his heart for the Crusade; little he cared for Jerusalem. And le Bon

was ever by his side. Together, they had planned to fly with their own knights to the house which Bagi had described. God grant she might yet be there. Once inside the city, others might have the battle and the victory; theirs was a nobler purpose. Passion was the impulse of the Crusade; theirs was love.

The noonday sun burned fiercely as the battle's fury. An hour; two; the third was passing. Here and there, barricade and wall were tottering. Then came the thought; some one perhaps, shouted it above the ringing lance, above the clash, the crushing blow of ax, the cries of pain, above the hateful roar; 'twas Friday, and the temper of the Crusaders rose and fanned itself into fiercer flames. Faster and harder struck their terrible blows. The great engines turned more swiftly, and the huge beams beat and pounded the ragged walls with awful power.

One there was, among the Christians, whose heart held the purpose of a fiend. All the day in that human storm, Guibert had sought Lacey. Everywhere his eye had followed him. Revenge must be complete. Now the chance comes. His sword is already raised. Lacey does not see. He is watching a swaying portion of the wall. Guibert gathers all his strength, but the swiftly descending blow is suddenly stopped by a blade long and heavy as his own, and, quickly turning, he cowers for a moment before the gaze of eyes that are blazing with anger.

"Hah!" cried a voice he had not forgotten. "It seems we have assassins here. So you thought you were not seen. Know then, that all this day my eyes have never left you; nor since your coward's blow at Antioch, for that matter. You were more careful of your sword when you refused me a knight's pastime at Doryleum.

You were over particular then about a little matter of quality. An assassin loses something of his noble blood, doesn't he? a traitor more, perhaps. It may stimulate your courage to know that a month ago I listened to words you had with Bagi. The hollow behind the ridge where you stood was a convenient spot——"

"Die, dog!" cried Guibert, as, white with rage, he made a sudden thrust at the speaker.

Lightly as a feather the weapon was turned aside. Quickly recovering, Guibert rushed again upon his antagonist. All his great strength, all his skill, every energy of his soul was roused. His one thought was to kill, and quickly. Straight at each other the two swords point; then ring and quiver in the quick blows that are struck. A few Crusaders, wondering at the sight, gather around. A sudden thrust which Guibert believes will rid him forever of this now hated foe, fails and he is for the moment unguarded. He springs back, instinctively, to avoid the blow he knows he cannot escape. In that moment, there is a crash. Part of the wall has fallen. In the great rush, Guibert is forced away, and hundreds of the Crusaders are flying to the spot.

"He has escaped me again," cried L'Enfans, as he hastened toward the place where Lacey had been.

The third hour was passed. It was three o'clock, exactly the hour, the moment, when there, on Calvary, the Saviour, dying, had said:

"Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit."

And now with a few hundred knights around him Godfrey stands within the city. Wild with the passion of the Crusade, maddened with thirst for blood, all the others are pouring in. A group of knights are trying to urge their horses through the streets, but the Moslems have not yet abandoned hope. L'Enfans and le

Bon are on each side of Lacey. The knights rush upon the foe, and blood begins to redden the streets. Behind them, all the way to the north and east, the Crusaders, thinking no more of the chants they had sung, or the prayers they had said, no longer in awe of the holy places, nor the streets made golden by the fancy of their dreams, strike and kill, in their mad fury, Moslem and Jew alike, nor do they spare woman or child. In an hour all the Moslem soldiers are dead or have escaped to the citadel. Fires are kindled and the smoke of burning buildings fills the air. A great cry of pain and horror rises from those who fly, and, flying, are caught by the hand of death, and as the Christians advance over the city, here and there, the fires they have lighted lick up the blood that is flowing in the streets.

Moslem soldiers no longer resist the knights who ride with Lacey, but their horses cannot push their way through the frightful crowds that fill the streets. Crazed by a terrible fear, Lacey dismounts, and leaving the animals, the knights move faster. They reach the house described by Bagi. There is no one in it. Every room is searched. Lacey is choking; he cannot speak. They are near the southern wall. The gate seems to be closed, and a great crowd is gathered about. There are soldiers among them, for they see the arms glistening. As they approach nearer, they see those in front are trying to open the gate, but the crowd surging upon them presses them so tightly they cannot. Suddenly le Bon seizes Lacey's arm. Some one in the crowd, a woman, it seems, raises a hand above the heads of the others. There is a kerchief in it. A soldier grasps the hand and pulls it down. 'Twas but a glimpse, but in it the choking disappears, and Lacey rushes forward like one mad.

CHAPTER XXXII

"TAKE ME AWAY, TANCRED!"

THE first sounds of the battle, at dawn, the day before, were heard by Minette. She knew the Crusaders had come. One of the slaves had told her, and day after day she had prayed and hoped. Azzadin had returned a week before, but she had seen him once only. All that day she had listened breathlessly, and in the middle of the afternoon she heard the shouts and saw people running with frightened looks. Then, in terrible fear, she prayed for Lacey, for her father to come. Every moment was torture. A hand could have saved her, yet she could see nothing save the poor flying ones in the street; then there were hurried steps, and Moslem soldiers came. They were the guards of Azzadin.

In her awful despair, she fled from them, and struggled with the brutes, grasping the couch, the table, even the casing of the window, and holding so tightly to the door that it was torn from its fastenings as they dragged her away. She saw Azzadin near, but he did not seem to notice her. Other soldiers gathered, a hundred she thought, and they pushed her along in the crowd that filled the street. Still, she did not lose hope, and panting all the while, her whole soul cried for help. Then she saw the knights come; saw them enter the house and come out again; saw Lacey madly struggling through

the crowd toward her. It was in that moment she waved the kerchief in her hand. A Moslem caught it away, and all the time they were nearing the gates, but the frantic, surging throng pressed against them so they would not open.

Near by, Azzadin watched the scene. He had not noticed the little band of knights. The Crusaders, he thought, were still far away, yet he was uneasy. He turned away to mount the wall where he might see them, and when he reached the summit he shivered, and a strange thought seized him, for his eye first rested upon the ragged depths below. He was angry with himself, and standing erect looked over the city. A sound of steps drew his attention, and turning he saw another upon the wall, one already but a step away, and as he looked upon his face, he stood like one turned to stone.

The crash of the falling wall had saved Guibert at the very moment when death stared at him. It was not by the hand of L'Enfans his crimes were to be punished. In the rush of the Crusaders he had escaped, and with a laugh, such as might have come from the souls of devils, he hurried away in the mad crowd. Some way to his revenge should yet come, and he rode among the Crusaders, and laughed again, as the blood flowed, nor cared whether it were of Christian or Moslem. Then a sudden impulse seized him. He would see Minette. Why, he could not tell, for he cared not for her fate. He tried to ride toward the Mosque, but the crowd checked his progress. He would have ridden over them, for he cared little for the maimed or the crushed. Leaving his horse he pushed his way along faster. None around him had arms, and all were too frightened to notice whether he were Christian, or Jew, or Moslem. Each flying one was busy with his own terror. Near the

temple square the crowd was so great he could not move farther. Before him was the eastern wall, now deserted. He could fly rapidly along its summit. Quickly mounting he moved swiftly by the crowds. Passing the square he was looking for the house where he knew Minette had been. What might be happening within! Perhaps she, too, was among the frightened throng in the streets below. Perhaps the band of Azzadin was already flying with her from the city. Then he looked along the southern wall. All the gates seemed closed. Before the triple gate was a great crowd, but none was passing. He moved on again, by the tower. There the figure of a man, gazing as he had been over the crowds, startled him. The man turned suddenly, and looked at him. There was murder in his eyes.

"Azzadin!"

He whispered the name so low to himself the other did not hear. His lips did not move. Some strange fear, such as he had never known before, held him to the spot as one frozen; then a thousand echoes of his own devil's laugh, long delayed, seemed to come from far below. One instant he thus stood; then Azzadin sprang upon him, and seizing his throat, tried to force him toward the edge of the wall.

Base as he was, Guibert was not a coward. A hundred times he had looked upon death. He was the taller of the two, and now, if a moment before a sudden weakness, a strange passing dread of some unknown horror had come to him, his great strength returned as quickly. He drew back slowly to the tower, and, planting himself firmly against it, tried to release himself from the clutch upon his throat. Once he had succeeded, but the Moslem grasped him again, and forced him from the spot. Then Guibert, towering over him, bent his head back-

ward and fell upon him, and together they rolled upon the wall and fought desperately. Then they rose again, each never releasing his hold upon the other. Again both were pressed against the tower; then back and forth their bodies swayed along the wall, each moment nearer the outer edge. Below, a grave was waiting. Suddenly Guibert, drawing himself back, with all his remaining strength, forced the Moslem over the wall.

Fate has come at last.

With a wild sweep of his arm, Azzadin again seizes his adversary; the foot of Guibert slips; then an awful look of horror rests for a moment upon their faces, as the two bodies plunge forward into the depths below. They strike the projecting cliffs, and whirl and turn in their mad descent, but never once do they part from their hateful embrace; then a dull sound comes up from below, a sound like some far-off blow, but there is no one on the wall to hear it.

And all the while, in every part of the city, passion rioted, and the awful crime went on. What mattered whether Jew or Moslem suffered! The ramparts were long since cleared, and now the dead and dying covered the streets, and the underground passages in which the unfortunates would have hidden from these unpitying Christian souls. Everything about was stained with red. Blood for blood! Christians had suffered and died in that Holy City, and now Moslem and Jew must pay; and so, inflamed with the madness of battle, thirsting for vengeance, they trampled, and crushed, and killed, nor ceased the cruel work till weary of the slaughter.

Down by the southern wall that skirted the valley of Hinnom was a braver scene, yet there, death was not less busy. A little band of knights plunged through the frantic crowd, as the wild storm, bending and twisting

the branches of the trees, sweeps through the forests. Near the triple gate is a line of Moslem soldiers. Behind them is Minette. With frantic effort, brave as her father would have been, she struggles to free herself from the clutch of the bronzed ruffians who hold her tightly. She sees Lacey and cries out to him in her anguish. Answering her cry he flies faster. A hundred weapons flash before him. He springs upon them; were it a wall of sharpened points he would have done the same. Le Bon and L'Enfans are at his side. Their swords sweep and flash in the sunlight, and their blows fall like the strokes of mighty engines. Around these three the other knights gather closely, and their sharp weapons cleave the bodies of the Moslems, who now encircle them. Above them all Lacey towers, and his whirling sword falls, like the lightning's stroke, upon those who would bar his way. All around him are bodies of dead Moslems. Blood covers his noble face, and flows down his arms, but he fights on with all the energy of his soul. He does not even know that he is hurt, nor feel a scratch of the weapons, that already a dozen times have cut and torn his flesh. He only knows that Minette is but a step away and he must reach her.

Another hour has passed. The dreadful noise of strife has ceased. The sun is passing behind the western towers and hills, and no sound stirs the air save the mourning and the sad wails of the stricken suffering ones. Choking with grief and fear, Louise walks with Tancred. Together, they have already searched long among the dead and the dying. Here and there, they step carefully over a crushed form, or stop to look into some dead face. They have passed the temple square, and are nearing the wall. They move more slowly for the dead lie

thicker. Now they come upon the body of a knight; another, a step away, and others still. Moslems, too, lie among them. Something about one of the dead knights seems familiar, and Tancred raises the helmet which has been pushed over the still face.

"Poor fellow!" he exclaims softly; "it is L'Enfans."

Louise did not reply. She did not even hear. She was looking at another, lying so near L'Enfans that the hand of the latter touched him. Then she moved her hand forward, as though seeking some support. The dead form she looked upon lay upon its side, the head resting upon an arm, as though the knight were but sleeping. Tancred turned the face gently, and spoke again, still lower than before:

"Le Bon, too!"

Louise moved slowly forward, and stooping, took the hand of the dead man, and holding it a moment very tenderly placed it upon his breast, over the heart she knew had once beat with such love for her. She did not speak, nor did a tear fall, but she kissed his forehead, and as Tancred marked the spot where the two lay, she turned away.

All around were bodies of the dead, knight and Moslem. Never was more dread, more cruel sight. Louise gazed upon it in silent horror, and as she gazed her heart throbbed with hopeless fear.

'Twas but a step away where two still forms lay together; a man and a woman. A glance only and the story is told. Beautiful Minette, her face, lovely, smiling, as though an angel had touched it, rested against that of Lacey. His arm held her closely to his heart and his hand lay upon her shoulder, holding yet the handle of a shivered blade, as though, even dying, he would save her.

Louise bent lower, lower down, and touched both the dead faces with her lips. Not a sigh, nor moan; if she could only weep, but tears would not come. Then, turning her white face, she whispered:

"Take me away, Tancred."

CHRISTIAN HERITAGE COLLEGE LIBRARY
Minette ; a story of the first
813 C889m
3059517